Conversion and Church: The Challenge of Ecclesial Renewal

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Conversion and Church

The Challenge of Ecclesial Renewal

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF H.P.J. WITTE

Edited by

Stephan van Erp
Karim Schelkens

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Contents

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"We Must Always Be Converted": The Church and the Challenge of Renewal

Stephan van Erp and Karim Schelkens

In the Angelus, on the Sunday before the opening of the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis spoke about conversion and the forgiveness of sins. He pointed out that conversion is not just for atheists but also for those who already consider themselves Christians: "No one can say: I'm fine. Not true, it would be presumptuous, because we must always be converted". The term 'conversion' is used in many different contexts and in a variety of ways. No single definition can be offered which could do justice to the polysemic and dynamic nature of this concept. Meanwhile, we are faced with a theological concept which each and every theologian will somehow have to come to terms with. This has also been the case for Professor Henk Witte, who held the Xaverius Chair for Ignatian Spirituality and Theology at the School for Catholic Theology at Tilburg University, the Netherlands, between 2011 and 2016. Admittedly, Witte has never written a full-fledged study on 'conversion', but he did not cease to touch upon the subject from various different angles. For those who study his work more closely, the concept of 'conversion' is quietly present as a leitmotiv throughout his theological writings, from the very first years to the most recent period.

In 1986, when Witte was finishing his doctoral dissertation on the notion of the *hierarchia veritatum*, the hierarchy of truths in the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, he came across the word when studying the conciliar interventions of Archbishop Eugene Louis D'Souza.[1] The young systematic theologian seems to have been triggered by D'Souza's focus on the *conversio cordis*. In his dissertation, Witte devoted some reflections to the term, clarifying that a true conversion of the heart involved an interplay of personal modesty, and the avoidance of 'hypertrophia', the over-accentuation or exaggeration of dogmatic truths. Conversion then could be defined as a capacity for reflection (without 'overdue rationalizations', Witte warned in his early work), and above all as a discernment that leads to a certain balance and nuance.

1 H. Witte, *"Alnaargelang hun band met het fundament van het christelijk geloof verschillend is". Wording en verwerking van de uitspraak over de 'hiërarchie' van waarheden van Vaticanum II*, (Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 1986), Cf. D'Souza's intervention at the council: *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (*AS*) II.6, 195–6.

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Consequently, he considered conversion to be related to renunciation and humility, rather than to self-manifestation or certainty. This, in a nutshell, determined his lifelong theological agenda, and those who are acquainted with Henk Witte and his work, will recognize how well these words fit not only his theology, but also his personality.

But there is more to it: these early statements by Witte on the notion of conversion were placed well within an integral part of his interest in the ecclesial reforms of the Second Vatican Council, an interest that would prove a lasting one throughout the development of his theology. Soon, not only the aspect of individual or spiritual conversion would become more prominent, he also developed a growing awareness of the importance of conversion as an ecclesial process. The complexity of conciliar renewal became a key element in Witte's theological interests and it combined rather well with his commitment to ecumenical dialogue. His colleagues in networks such as the Klingenthal Group and the Peter and Paul Seminar praise him for showing theological sensibility and prudence, important qualities in a dialogue partner. Anyone who reads the many studies Henk Witte has published on ecumenical issues, will be struck by the diligent and receptive approach of non-Roman-Catholic Christianity they reflect. As an ecumenical theologian, Witte has shown himself to be quite aware of the fact that in interdenominational and interfaith dialogue, the notion of 'conversion' often has connotations of proselytism. Very recently, he published a study on the 'apostolate of conversion' by Dutch Catholics who would later become pioneers of ecumenism, such as Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, focusing precisely on this tension. Again, it became clear that a distinction should be made between individual and ecclesial conversion. In his recent writings, he frequently returns to the topic of conversion from his new interest in Ignatian spirituality and theology. The Dutch term 'omvorming' – perhaps best translated as 'spiritual transformation' – played a central role in Witte's inaugural lecture for the Chair of Ignatian Spirituality at Tilburg University.[2] In it, he spoke about conversion as a 'displacement of the centre of consciousness from the self to the penetrating and all-encompassing secret of God'. Rereading these words after hearing Pope Francis's appeal, on December 6 of 2015, that "we must always be converted", Witte's enthusiasm about Pope Francis's call for a pastoral conversion of the Church and his stress on the Ignatian principle of discernment can hardly come as a surprise. We may perhaps close the circle, by referring to Witte's valedictory address in 2016. Focusing on the Ignatian 'way of doing things' as a source of inspiration

2 H. Witte, *AMDG. Een ignatiaans perspectief op de ongemakkelijke verhouding van spiritualiteit en theologie*, (Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 2011).

for understanding Vatican II, he touched upon the theme of conversion once more, this time linking pope Francis's call for a decentered church with the Ignatian principle of the modus operandi. Such a decentered church, he insisted, demands, in the very first place 'a conversion, a new way of doing things'.[3]

The contributions in this volume have been written in honour of Henk Witte. By now, we hope to have made clear why this Festschrift is not merely a collection of articles of colleagues and friends, a *liber amicorum*, although it certainly is that too: a book written by his colleagues and friends. It has however also been constructed (inspired by the idea of unity in diversity) around one single theme, which runs through the various theological fields in which Henk has been active: Systematic Theology, Vatican II-Studies, Ecumenism, and Ignatian Studies. Precisely these four areas form the framework within which the seventeen contributions to this book are placed. Together, they offer a kaleidoscopic view of the notion of conversion, with a focus on the Church and the churches, and the variety of conversions that occur between and in the churches.

In Part One of this volume, a set of five contributions approaches the phenomenon of conversion from a variety of systematic and historical-theological perspectives. The section opens with an article by Nico Schreurs on the conversion experience of the first disciples. The biblical account of the disciples' conversion is intimately linked with the experience of Christ's resurrection. Through the lens of the theology of Edward Schillebeeckx, Schreurs investigates the reception, critique and sustainability of Schillebeeckx's hypothesis of the disciples' conversion in connection with the Easter appearances and the resurrection creed. Next, Mathias Smalbrugge studies Augustine's account of conversion in terms of deification, and he discusses the image-character of the theme of deification. Are we able to come nearer to God once we remember what we are, i.e. His image? Or are we completely dependent on His intervention, and will there always be this unbridgeable difference between God and man, implying that deification is nothing other than God's grace that allows us to be renewed? These questions try to find a balance between conversion as the work of God's grace and the work of human imagination. Human creativity is also the key theme in the third essay by Wiel Logister. In it, he focuses on the medieval period by discussing the problem of the relationship between conversion and providence in the writings of Dante Alighieri. Through a close reading of Dante's texts, he stresses the role of Christ in bringing to light what

3 H. Witte, *De ignatiaanse 'manier van doen' als inspiratie bij het verstaan van Vaticanum II*, (Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, 2016), 14.

human creativity really is. After this chapter, Marcel Sarot in turn offers a thorough theological investigation into the idea of conversion after death. The notion of post-mortem conversion is studied in confrontation with patristic voices such as Augustine and Clement of Alexandria, and contemporary theologians like Gavin D'Costa. Stephan van Erp's contribution, the final article in the systematic section, examines the conversion of David Jones, a British soldier in the First World War, and a painter and a poet. This offers the occasion for reflections on the sacramental aspects of conversion, by showing that a work of art follows the basic sacramental structure of every human conversion. Like art, conversion has at its heart the discovery that the convert is not searching but being found, a discovery that turns the convert into a sign of that which makes a sacrament possible.

Grounded in the experience that God is active in our world and invites or even tempts the Christian toward conversion, the Ignatian tradition has played a central role in the development of theological thought and ecclesial praxis regarding conversion. From this angle, Part Two of this volume contains four studies focusing on the Jesuit tradition. After Van Erp's focus on the importance of the arts and imagination, Arnold Smeets continues this approach with a study investigating the Jesuit architecture of the Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, and its connection with the sixteenth-century Roman novitiate house of the Society of Jesus. Smeets approaches the issue of conversion through the lens of Gregory the Great's experience of conversion as temptation. This is followed by a study on the three stages of conversion of the British Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, by Joep Van Gennip. Here too, the interest lies in the integration of Jesuit spirituality and the notion of conversion. Finally, this section contains two studies on the calls to conversion by Pope Francis, one written by Catherine Clifford on mission and one by Eugene Duffy on Church reform, both highlighting the importance of conversion on both the individual level and on the ecclesial need to turn away from spiritual worldliness.

The reform and conversion proposed by Pope Francis, however, not only refers to the Ignatian principle of discernment, it is also deeply rooted in the reforms decreed by the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, which is the central theme in Part Three of this volume. At the heart of the conciliar legacy, as is underlined by the contribution of Erik Borgman, was the Catholic Church's rediscovery of contemporary society and its willingness to enter into dialogue with the modern world. Borgman emphasizes the importance of theology for this continuing conversion of the Church. Within this renewed relationship of Church and world, Christians are challenged to an ongoing theological conversion, especially on the level of ecclesial structures. This theme is developed further in the Thomas Green's contribution, which studies the renewal of

ecclesiology from the angle of the canonical implications and possibilities opened by Vatican II. The part on conciliar renewal closes with an article by Jos Moons studying the 'rediscovery' of the Holy Spirit in *Lumen gentium*. Through an in-depth analysis of conciliar and preconciliar magisterial discourse in the field of pneumatology, the author illustrates that Vatican II did in fact imply a 'pneumatological conversion', embedded in a broader turnabout on the level of both Christology and ecclesiology.

With Part Four, this volume concludes with a section devoted to the study of conversion from an ecumenical perspective. Here too, the link with the renewals of Vatican II is evident: the fundamental insight of this part lies with the fact that the ecclesiological turnabout of the latest council did not only imply a renewal of ecclesial structures but also a combined awareness of the sinfulness of the church and its members and the need for a turn toward dialogue. In this context, the notion of 'conversion' especially appears as problematic, in that it may include conversion from one confession to another. Clearly, a tension is felt between the 'work of conversion' on the one hand and 'ecumenical dialogue' on the other. The latter tension and the way in which the so-called 'apostolate of conversions' developed before and during Vatican II is the object of a careful study by Peter De Mey. This is followed by a contribution by Annemarie Mayer on the way in which conversion from one church to another poses an ongoing problem and challenge to Christian life in the postconciliar ecumenical movement. She shows how conversion as a key ecumenical concept remains a 'hot potato' because the different meanings of conversion (i.e. moving from one church to another and the fundamental principle of conversion to God) are not sufficiently distinguished, and because of the abuses that tend towards proselytism among Christians. The third essay in the final part is by Adelbert Denaux, who develops the interrelatedness of the notions of sinfulness and conversion within the perspective of the Anglican Roman Catholic Dialogue, in particular in its recent phase, ARCIC III. The closing essay was written by André Birmelé, who reflects on the 1991 Document of the Groupe des Dombes, on the conversion of the churches, and highlights the importance of conversion as an ecumenical theme.

Together, these essays present an overview of the concept of 'conversion' in the Christian churches and the Roman Catholic Church in particular. Through detailed analyses of the developments before, during and after the Second Vatican Council, and of the challenges in ecumenical dialogue, the complexity and richness of the concept will become clearer. Most of all, however, the authors' approaches and scholarship do justice to the meticulous work of Henk Witte. As a teacher, he has been an inspiration to younger generations of theologians for whom the language of traditional Christian theology

has become increasingly more difficult to understand. Witte has been at his best when building bridges between the language and worldview of a global Church and the life world of students in a secular culture. Building bridges has also characterised his theology, not only thematically in his ecumenical studies, but also stylistically, in his approach and understanding of different factions and sensibilities within the churches. The fact that he, not being a Jesuit himself, became the first holder of the new chair of Ignatian spirituality and theology in the Netherlands, is clearly a sign of the trust that people have had in the reliability and thoughtfulness of his theology. With this volume, the editors and the authors are honouring Henk Witte's work. Like conversion, it is work in progress, motivated by the ongoing challenge of renewal.

To conclude, we would like to thank those who have helped the project of this book to come to a fruitful close. We are much indebted to the members of the editorial board of Brill's Series in Catholic Theology for the time and effort they spent in reading and commenting the manuscript. The book has improved considerably thanks to them. We also owe much credit to the editorial staff at Brill, not in the least to Mirjam Elbers, who guided us through the whole process with a keen sense of efficiency and a strong commitment to publishing high quality books. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to Geoffrey Turner, for his willingness and diligence to reread and revise the chapters in this volume.

PART 1

Systematic Theological Perspectives

CHAPTER 1

The 'Conversion' of the Disciples: Schillebeeckx's View of the Resurrection of Christ

Nico Schreurs

In this contribution I shall deal with an understanding of conversion which will probably differ from the way in which many of the authors in this book – devoted to my colleague Henk Witte, with whom I once had the pleasure of sharing an office – will treat the subject. I would like to investigate what role conversion, or perhaps rather: being converted, plays in Edward Schillebeeckx's theology of Christ's resurrection. The heading Schillebeeckx used to introduce his reconstruction of the Easter experience of Jesus's disciples runs as follows: 'The Easter experience: being converted, at Jesus's initiative, to Jesus as the Christ – Salvation found conclusively in Jesus'.[1] In this title Schillebeeckx was trying to express almost all the significant features of his view of this conversion. One element, however, is missing: there is no mention of the people who are being converted: Jesus's disciples.

It may seem strange to speak of the disciples 'being converted'. Were they not Jesus's followers from the beginning? Why should they, who left everything to follow Jesus, be in need of conversion? At this point it becomes clear that Schillebeeckx was using the word 'conversion' to denote something not implied in the common use of the word. In general, conversion involves a radical change of life, as in the case of someone who changes from one religion to another. In his inaugural lecture, our mutual colleague Professor Rein Nauta chose the apostle Paul as a model for his argument. He concluded that conversion is motivated by the recognition of failure, sin, guilt and shame. Conversion has the effect, amongst other things, of a radical reconstruction of one's life and becoming a new person.[2] In recent history, conversion was primarily connected with missionary activity in order to convert the heathen or non-Christians to Christianity. This is the transitive sense of the verb. But

1 E. Schillebeeckx, *Jezus, het verhaal van een levende* (Baarn: Nelissen, 1974, 3rd enlarged edition 1975), 310. I refer to his book as JN. The standard English translation is: E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, in: *The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx*, vol. VI (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 347. I refer to this book as: JE. – I would like to thank Ted Schoof o.p. for his encouragement and support during the composition of this study.

2 R. Nauta, *Over bekering* (Groningen: Jan Haan, 1989).

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conversion can also refer to an act of the convert himself. In that case it may start from a situation of stress or it can be a reaction to an urgent appeal and may entail the personal decision to opt for a radical new orientation in life and moral conduct.[3]

In his landmark study, *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor describes conversion as the transformation of a person beyond the usual range of our experience. He calls this: making contact with the fullness of being. Individually, this kind of conversion may reach this fullness by contemplation resulting in a mystical encounter or vision, by experiencing utmost negativity or by engaging in a moment of life-changing intensity. Collectively, conversion may lead converts to adopt the transformation of their way of life into a totally new paradigm.[4] Transformations of this intense and all-encompassing kind run the risk of creating an attitude of fanatical absolutism, as might be seen in cases of conversion to fundamentalist forms of religion and, in extreme cases, to jihadism. Taylor stresses, therefore, that in the process of conversion the role of experience should be connected with the context – i.e. the event or the person – that causes the conversion. Experience is not exclusively something on the part of the subject, the person who is being converted, but is also influenced by the circumstances in which the conversion takes place.

In this article I want to describe the part conversion plays in Schillebeeckx's most influential book: *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology.* In particular, I shall try to reconstruct the part conversion plays in what he called the Easter-experience of the disciples. In a first step I shall analyse his understanding of conversion in the pre-Easter relationship of the disciples with their master; next I shall reconstruct, describe, and analyse the part the conversion of the disciples plays in the origin and development of the early Christian communities' confession of Jesus's resurrection; thirdly, I shall examine the reception, critique and sustainability of Schillebeeckx's hypothesis of the disciples' conversion in connection with the Easter appearances and the resurrection creed; and I shall end with some conclusions.

1 The Conversion of the Disciples as Followers of Jesus

In his book *Jesus* Schillebeeckx wanted to tell the story in such a way that the message of salvation in Jesus of Nazareth and the belief in this Jesus as the

3 J. Werbick, "Bekehrung, Systematisch-theologisch", *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 2 (1994), 169–170.

4 C. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 728–737.

Christ that arises from that message can be meaningful for people today (JE, 16). Although not explicitly apologetic, the aim of the book was to search "(in faith and in a critical spirit) for possible signs in the historical Jesus that might direct the human quest for 'salvation'" (JE, 84). To this end he used the historical-critical method, grounding his choice in a balanced discussion of the schools of exegesis current at the time, and drawing on a set of criteria for identifying the historical Jesus. (JE, part I). In part II of his book he therefore committed himself to the task of a careful historical reconstruction, directed at the message and praxis of salvation, proclaimed and lived by Jesus until his death on the cross and written down by four evangelists in different text layers, redactions and implicit theological views. At the end of the second and third parts, he concentrated on the reconstruction of the continuation of this salvation after Jesus's death. His disciples played an important part in both histories, the story of Jesus before and after his death. Schillebeeckx repeatedly described their story as a transformation of their belief in Jesus before his death into their Christological confession of Jesus as the Christ. (JE, 193). First I shall pay attention to the companionship of Jesus and the disciples during Jesus's lifetime.

Schillebeeckx started by analysing exegetically the beginning of Jesus's proclamation of God's coming salvation. One would expect that a lengthy investigation of the expected reaction to that proclamation would follow immediately: Jesus's proclamation of the gospel, the good tidings, was at the same time a call for *metanoia*, for a radical conversion towards a new life. Schillebeeckx, however, undertook this investigation only at the end of his full explanation of Jesus's message of God's Kingdom and his praxis of liberation, when he deals with the 'pre-Easter fellowship with Jesus and disciples who 'go after him' (JE, 193).

In this section Schillebeeckx examined carefully and at length what conversion meant in this context. Earlier he had in fact mentioned conversion when he described John's baptism. But in Schillebeeckx's view, the conversion Jesus asked of his followers was quite different. As an apocalyptic prophet, John proclaimed the judgment that was on hand from which there is no escape because of the evil perpetrated by his audience. He announced a baptism of repentance as a condition for the forgiveness of their sins (Lk. 3,3). The way in which John is introduced in what Schillebeeckx identified as the Q text was similar to Mark's introduction of Jesus's preaching: a call for conversion (*metanoia; metanoeite*) in view of the coming of God's Kingdom (Mt. 3,2; Mk. 1,15). There were, however, two main differences between John and Jesus: whereas John offered a baptism as a sign of new life (Mt. 3,11), Jesus did not make baptism a condition for entering the Kingdom of God and his preaching was not focused on the repentance for sins but rather on the message of an *euaggelion*. What, then,

was it that, in Schillebeeckx's section on the pre-Easter fellowship of his disciples, Jesus asked from his followers; what was the meaning of his call for *metanoia*? Was *metanoia* the same as conversion?

Schillebeeckx explicitly compared the stereotyped scheme by which the calling of the disciples was described in the Synoptic Gospels with conversion in late Judaism to Israel's God (JE, 197). The analogy with Jewish parallels is a main feature of his book *Jesus*. Elements in common were: abandoning one's possessions and forsaking family and home in order to follow God unconditionally. A radically new element, however, was the conversion to Jesus (JE, 199). Schillebeeckx qualified this conversion to Jesus as an eschatological *metanoia* and called it 'an authentic conversion' (JE, 199). It was a religious conversion in as far as it made people turn away from the salvific scheme of the Jewish law, and by following Jesus they acknowledged that God's still-to-come rule had become a reality already present (JE, 199). Strictly speaking, the conversion to Jesus was a conversion to God 'on the authority of Jesus', because conversion to Jesus with a truly soteriological effect was only possible after Easter (JE, 200).

Conversion as used by Schillebeeckx in his analysis of Jesus's pre-Easter fellowship, involved a complete turn-about, in which there was no distinction between ordinary and perfect followers. There was no question that it was sin or an immoral life that prompted a conversion. The story of the rich young man (Mt. 19, 16–22) showed that he did not fail to keep the commandments, but was reluctant to give up his possessions to follow Jesus. None of the traditional aspects of reconciliation, such as the confession of sins, repentance and giving satisfaction,[5] were needed. In fact, this kind of conversion was not a form of reconciliation or conversion at all. It was the readiness to transform one's life completely in order to join the fellowship of Jesus. This conversion was not in the first place an act inspired by human decisions, but in the end an act of divine grace, announced by Jesus in his preaching of the coming Kingdom of God, whose cause is the cause of mankind; in other words: salvation imparted by God ('Heil van Godswege').[6]

5 The traditional technical terms are: *confessio oris, contritio cordis, satisfactio operis*. Cf. N. Schreurs, "Vergeving en verzoening in de hedendaagse cultuur", N. Schreurs, *Werk maken van verzoening* (Budel: Damon, 2004), 193–218.

6 JE 133. In his analysis of Jesus's pre-Easter life, Schillebeeckx already stressed the soteriological implications of the fellowship of Jesus. When Walter Kasper in his review of Schillebeeckx's *Jesus* said he missed the soteriology in the systematic reflection, he probably meant a classical, traditional soteriology, which included Christ's work of salvation in the sense of the Chalcedon dogma. W. Kasper, "Liberale Christologie: Zum Jesus-Buch von Edward Schillebeeckx", *Evangelische Kommentare* 6 (1976), 357–360: "Ist eine Christologie, die nicht zugleich

The consequences of the conversion of Jesus's followers were, first and foremost, participation in God's eschatological plan of salvation, then the mandate to commit oneself to preaching the Kingdom of God that was at hand, and finally the obligation to be loyal to Jesus, their master or 'team leader' (JE, 201), even to suffer martyrdom in the service of God's Kingdom (JE, 201–202). That is why, in Mark's version of the passion story, the fact that the disciples panicked and abandoned Jesus at his arrest was taken so seriously by Schillebeeckx. Leaving Jesus and reneging on their discipleship constituted, even more than Jesus's death, a breach in the sharing of Jesus's life and message and that demanded a new conversion.

2 Conversion and the Easter Experience of the Disciples

Conversion is the 'working hypothesis' (JE, 348) with the help of which Schillebeeckx tried to reconstruct historically the events after Jesus's death. His aim was to get at the historical origins of what later the apostolic creed called Jesus's resurrection from the dead. Conversion is the key word with which Schillebeeckx hoped to establish a convincing historical reconstruction of what happened after Jesus died on the cross and was buried, and before the formal apostolic resurrection kerygma was established. Why did he choose this word to develop his unusual and untraditional view on the resurrection, the appearances and the sending of the Spirit, a view that was so unfamiliar that it has been attacked by (some) theologians?

In his supplementary reflections on the resurrection, which were added to the third edition of the original Dutch book in order to prevent misunderstanding, Schillebeeckx pointed out two main disputed questions. First, there was the question whether Jesus's resurrection was exclusively an act of God, objectified in miraculous events and actions, or the outcome of purely subjective reflection on and memory of Jesus's life and praxis that should be continued in the Christian community. He called this the dilemma between fideism and empiricism (JE, 605–608). A second, minor question was whether resurrection is just the salvific dimension of Jesus's death. Conversion played an important role in the first dilemma, and I shall concentrate on that here.

One may raise as a question: Why was Schillebeeckx forced to resort to the historical construction of a renewed conversion of the disciples? Why did he not follow the kerygma of the early Christian communities and reflect on the

Soteriologie ist, überhaupt möglich? (…) Diesen Weg hat Schillebeeckx jedoch (…) schon im Ansatz verbaut" (359).

stories of the empty tomb and the appearances of the living Christ to Peter and the other disciples as evidence of the resurrection? As far as I can see, he had a cluster of motives for not following the traditional paths. As for the empty tomb, he agreed with many exegetes at the time that this was a later local tradition, and with systematic theologians that an empty tomb could not have been a basis for the acceptance of a resurrection from the dead (JE, 304–313).[7] The reference to the appearances implied a more complicated question. In a lengthy and careful analysis of the way Jesus's appearances or manifestations after his death were treated in the Gospels and in Paul's letters (JE, 315–329), he distinguished the specific redactions of the evangelists and of Paul. Only the Gospels of Luke and John contained detailed descriptions of Jesus's appearances, which were modelled after the Hellenistic rapture scheme (JE, 312). He concluded that the manifestations of the risen one were "as it were, an 'empty vessel'" (JE, 326), filled with the apostolic kerygma. This official apostolic tradition or kerygma conveyed the meaning of the Easter event by interpreting it for the growing (and meanwhile established) Church with special attention to the legitimation of the Church's missionary mandate (JE, 323). According to him, the stories of the appearances, therefore, presupposed the existence of the early Christian communities.[8] That is why he denied that the appearances belonged to the earliest references to the risen Jesus (JE, 321). The reality of the Easter event and the original Easter experience was, he concluded, independent of the traditions centred round the Jerusalem tomb and the appearance traditions (JE, 363).

Schillebeeckx tried to reconstruct this preceding Easter faith historically by means of the term conversion. Why did he turn to this conversion process, of which there was no mention in the Gospel texts nor in the later kerygmata or creeds?

From the start, Schillebeeckx's *Jesus* was an attempt to get access to the life and praxis of the historical or earthly Jesus by using historical methods. To that

7 In his answer to some critical reviews of his Jesus books: E. Schillebeeckx, *Tussentijds verhaal over twee Jezus boeken* (Bloemendaal: H. Nelissen, 1978); English translation: *Interim Report on the Books Jesus and Christ*, in: *The Collected Works of Edward Schillebeeckx*, vol. VIII (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), here referred to as IE) Schillebeeckx discussed at length Albert Descamps's views on the empty tomb (IE, 74–77). He agreed with Descamps that by integrating the story of the empty tomb into other Easter traditions the disappearance of Jesus's body might have had some special significance to people of the time.

8 Schillebeeckx distinguished the *event* of the appearances and the later *stories* of these manifestations. He did not deny the historicity of the encounters of Peter and the other disciples, but he did not agree with the view that these stories were evidence of Jesus factual, bodily resurrection (JE, 307–308; IE, 75–76).

end he analysed the movement Jesus had evoked. He distinguished several pre-Gospel traditions, like the Q source, and reconstructed what the redactors of the Gospels had added as their personal basic theology. He then went on to analyse the echoes of Jesus's life and praxis in four early Christian 'creedal trends' which eventually gave rise to the official apostolic Easter kerygma. (JE, 27–31). In this whole sequence of sources in which the Easter experience has been articulated, he singled out an event that according to him was at the basis of all later proclamations of Jesus as the crucified and risen one, an event that Schillebeeckx reconstructed as central to the conversion of the disciples that manifested itself in the form of an appearance vision (JE, 357).

What exactly did Schillebeeckx mean by conversion in the situation of the disciples after Jesus's death and burial? Let us first examine to what extent conversion in this new situation differed from the conversion Jesus asked from his followers during his lifetime. The fellowship of Jesus's followers did not entail forgiveness of sin. Conversion at that time implied a complete turn-about, a *metanoia*, which meant leaving behind kinship and possessions, as in the Jewish model of conversion, with the exception that the decisive new element was faith in Jesus. Compared with this pre-Easter conversion, the conversion model that he used to reconstruct what had happened after Jesus's death, had two new elements: there was now need for forgiveness, and moreover, faith in Jesus had become the Christological faith in Jesus as the Christ.

A full description of the way Schillebeeckx used conversion as a means of depicting the Easter experience of the disciples should start with the description of a more or less 'sinful state' that the disciples were in and from which they turned away. He found traces of such a sinful state, or to put it more mildly, an embarrassing situation that the disciples had manoeuvred themselves into when they abandoned their master at his arrest in the garden of Gethsemane. At various places in his book he alluded to this event[9] before actually making it a special topic as the opening paragraph of the section headed: "The Christian story after Jesus's death: the kingdom of God takes on the appearance of Jesus Christ" – a section he particularly pointed to as a an example of the complicated relationship of scholarly (in this case historical-critical) assessment and the irreducible identity of persons in history (JE, 83–84).

This proved to be true. His exegesis of the disciples' defection and even betrayal of Jesus was a careful, laborious and painstaking examination of the versions that the Synoptic Gospels and St. John offered of this event. Schillebeeckx stated that the versions of Matthew and Luke implied much less

9 E.g. when explaining the renewed need for a post-critical history (JE, 58) or when discussing the consequences of the fellowship of Jesus's followers (JE, 202).

an accusation of Peter and the other disciples than the one in Mark, even to the point that they did not mention the general flight of the disciples. It was mainly the Gospel of Mark that, in accordance with the theological standpoint of his redaction in the whole Gospel, pointed out the weakness of the disciples and their inability to rightly understand Jesus, and finally their flight and defection. But this exegetical form- and redaction-critical analysis of the Markan tradition was by no means easy. Schillebeeckx was even forced to accept Peter's denial as a separate, independent tradition added by Mark (JE, 294; 296; 297). All the same, he laid much stress on the betrayal of all disciples as part of his conversion theory. He had to admit that it was mainly a theologically biased and exaggerated redaction by Mark of the general defection, and that this rested on a 'very flimsy basis' (JE, 298). Nevertheless he finally came to the conclusion that all the disciples stopped following Jesus at his arrest (JE 294–295). This was perfectly in line with his argument that this failure of the disciples' faith (*oligopistia* – a general theme in Mark's Gospel) provided the basis for their potential conversion (JE, 296).

The actual conversion of the disciples after Jesus's death was, in Schillebeeckx's view, the experience of being forgiven at the initiative of the living Jesus. The outcome of this experience of forgiveness was that the disciples linked their belief in the earthly pre-Easter Jesus with their post-Easter experience of Jesus as the Christ and that they reassembled as a group, at the example of Peter (JE, 347–368). Was this a usual concept of conversion, we may well ask, especially when we compare it with the characteristics of the *metanoia* conversion we discussed previously and with what people traditionally understand by conversion?

The reconstruction of the original Easter experience of the disciples still followed the model of Jewish conversion, as Schillebeeckx has done earlier. This Jewish model essentially followed the structure of the conversion of a gentile to the Jewish religion, but in this procedure no forgiveness was involved and there was no question of apostasy. It was a conversion in a commonly known fashion: a change of religion. Schillebeeckx, however, in his analysis of the disciples' conversion as the historically earliest Easter experience, pointed to yet another element of the Jewish model: illumination, the bright light which accompanied the vision of God revealing himself (JE, 450–351). Paul's Damascus conversion was structured after this example (JE, 329–345). Schillebeeckx called this a disclosure experience (JE, 354, 357 cf. 592), drawing on his familiarity with analytical philosophy. This illumination, the light in which the disciples saw Jesus after his death, is not directly mentioned in the New Testament, just as, for that matter, virtually no conversion terminology can be traced in its traditional Easter texts. But just as the account of the story of

Paul's conversion evolved from a vision of light to a legitimation of his mission to the gentiles, so Schillebeeckx assumed a visual light element in the conversion of the disciples as well. In this light they could, after Jesus's death which enabled them to survey the totality of Jesus's life and recognize this completed life as God's revelation in Jesus of Nazareth, explicitly express their Christological confession of Jesus as the Christ, the definite salvation-in-Jesus imparted by God (JE, 354; 599).

Reviewing the elements of Schillebeeckx's understanding and use of the term 'conversion', it strikes me that this concept is not so much one model, but rather a combination of different processes and corresponding models. First, there is the model of confession and forgiveness. The disciples abandoned and betrayed their master. This was a serious breach of their faith in Jesus whom they had followed, but even according to Schillebeeckx, it was not a total lapse of faith, or apostasy (JE, 354). In the confession model, the conditions for receiving forgiveness are the confession of guilt, repentance of the wrongdoing and rendering satisfaction. In Schillebeeckx's use of the conversion model the grace of forgiveness was not explicitly linked to these conditions: forgiveness was indeed a divine grace. Therefore, the process he described bears more resemblance to the model of enlightenment or disclosure. The Easter experience of the disciples was to recognize the man they had followed, whom they had turned away from and who had died at the cross, as the living Christ who had offered them the grace of forgiveness. Even a third model could be distinguished if one considers the Easter experience, as Schillebeeckx expressly did, as a call for the reassembly of the scattered disciples. This call renewed the appeal to start a new life, as the *metanoia* appeal did, but now in the community of the crucified and risen one.

There is room for discussion as to whether in this sequence the term conversion is always used adequately. It certainly is a very complex denominator for what Schillebeeckx wanted to present as the original Easter event. Now, I think, it will be well to examine a few critics of his hypothesis.

3 The Hypothesis of Conversion as the Original Easter Experience Criticized and Defended

In his *Interim Report*, Schillebeeckx defended his view on conversion, as he did in the supplementary reflections that were added to the third Dutch edition of *Jesus* and are integrated into part four as part of the Christological problem. In his discussion with the Belgian exegete Albert Descamps he stressed that the conversion of the disciples is a historically determinable fact (IE, 66; cf. JE 348)

as opposed to the resurrection itself that was a meta-empirical and meta-historical, eschatological reality, an event that without an experiential basis was 'non-existent' for us (JE, 348). For Schillebeeckx the conversion process was an all-encompassing experience with a mainly cognitive aspect, "namely the experience of the new (pneumatic or spiritual) presence of the risen Jesus in the regrouped community" (IE, 69). This conversion process, which included the sending of the Spirit, the constitution of the Church and even "baptism with Holy Spirit by the Lamb" (IE, 68), was for him the key element why he chose to approach the Easter event through conversion (IE, 69).

The discussion with Descamps in the *Interim Report* concerned mainly the difference between conversion and the appearances. For Schillebeeckx these two were, as we have seen, not identical. While discussing Descamps's critique (IE, 63–78),[10] he stated that conversion was mainly a cognitive and emotive happening, whereas appearances were mainly visual. The appearances of the risen Jesus to Peter and other followers implied that Jesus has been seen or, in the technical term, has shown himself, a terminology that in his view belonged to a later phase in the development of the Easter faith (IE, 69, note 43). Historically, conversion was the first experience of the living and forgiving Jesus. But this did not imply that for Schillebeeckx the appearances were not an important factor. He did not deny that shortly after Jesus's death some people claimed to have seen Jesus. He even conceded that the parallels he ascertained between Old Testament reports of revelatory visions in the Jewish conversion model, such as the visit of Abraham's three guests, and visionary elements of the Easter experiences, were not always merely literary analogies and might also be the accounts of historical events. He even acknowledged that the disciples' conversion experience took place in the form of an appearance (JE, 357). Nevertheless, in his view the visual element was not the main point (IE, 70). The visual – by which he meant that which characterizes the appearances – was "never a source of kerygma, but merely a medium for receiving and artic-

10 A.L. Descamps wrote an on the whole favourable review of Schillebeeckx's book, cf. A.L. Descamps, "Comptes rendus", *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 6 (1975), 212–223. Although he had a high esteem for the work, Descamps found it too ambitious. His main objection against what he called Schillebeeckx's deduction of the conversion of the disciples as the original Easter experience (deduction, because there was no written evidence in the New Testament texts) was that if this at all preceded the stories of the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus, it would soon be overtaken by those two well documented stories (220). In other words: although Descamps thought that the conversion hypothesis was well grounded and compatible with the faith in the resurrection, he opposed the order in which Schillebeeckx placed the various events and traditions of the Easter message in his historical-genetic research (221). I shall return to this criticism later.

ulating a revelation" (IE, 69, note 43). The difference between conversion and appearances could be characterized by an image that Schillebeeckx used in his analysis of the three accounts of Paul's conversion: he called Paul's Damascus vision (the visual element) the vertical, and the various actual accounts of Paul's conversion, the horizontal scheme (JE, 331).

This discussion between Descamps and Schillebeeckx about conversion versus appearances is crucial. Descamps called Schillebeeckx's conversion hypothesis a deduction, since it had no basis in the texts of the New Testament. For Schillebeeckx, on the contrary, the conversion model was the 'echo' of the very first foundational event in the Christian community (JE, 349). Appearances with their mainly visual aspects had significance only as 'a redundancy element' (IE, 70) of the original conversion event, the essence of which is cognitive: the recognition of the new presence of the risen Jesus.

Why did Schillebeeckx so consistently stress the originality of the conversion model compared with the vision of Jesus in the appearances? The main motive, I think, was an apologetic one, as was the whole enterprise of his book that aimed at critically looking into the intelligibility of the Christological belief in Jesus, especially with regard to its origin (JE, 15–16). Behind many complicated exegetical analyses and systematic reflections his motive was to do away with much 'hocus-pocus'[11] that characterized the reports of the appearances of Jesus; he wanted to make Christian faith, especially faith in the crucified-and-risen one, accessible to human analysis (JE, 607). Appearances entailed too much 'supernatural hocus-pocus' (JE, 610).

Schillebeeckx did not explicitly point it out, but the rapture scheme and the *theios aner* model, which Luke and John used in their Gospels as a matrix in their stories of the appearances, did contain a lot of such supernatural hocus-pocus, as when Jesus entered through closed doors like a phantom or other features of the rapture scheme. Luke did so, not to present a mythological interpretation, but to render the Christian message accessible and intelligible for his Greek readers. In the same way, Schillebeeckx wanted to make the transformation of the panic-stricken disciples after Jesus's arrest and death into men who boldly claimed that Jesus was alive and raised from the dead, psychologically intelligible for people of our time (JE, 348). The conversion of the disciples was a revelatory grace from God, which 'is no "sudden invasion

11 Schillebeeckx used this word in order to express what in his eyes was a too literal understanding of metaphorical language. Cf. his contribution to the article by B. Westera, "Opstanding of hocus-pocus? Geloven de godgeleerden van tegenwoordig niet meer in de lichamelijke opstanding van Jezus? Bertram Westera vroeg het aan tien van hen", *Hervormd Nederland*, 19 augustus 1989, 10–15.

from above", in other words, no hocus pocus, but is effective in and through psychic realities and human experiences (IE, 65).

In the discussion with Descamps on the visual element of both conversion and appearances, Schillebeeckx openly confessed that he wanted to "free this visual element from the heavy dogmatic significance which some attach to it, namely of being the foundation of the whole of Christian faith" (IE, 71). By this he meant the fundamentalist position of a form of orthodoxy that for its articulation of the resurrection faith only relied on the Gospel stories of the appearances, instead of acknowledging the historic process of human conversion experiences. This led in his opinion to the unreserved acceptance of supernatural intervention, magic and the often mentioned 'hocus pocus' (cf. IE, 11). This was the reason why in *Jesus* he mostly kept silent about the visual elements in the conversion process, although he frequently pointed out the analogy with the Jewish conversion model with its mystic vision of the light of God's law, and the fact that in the culture of that time visual phenomena and not only rational, cognitive elements were an usual choice (IE, 70).

The discussion with Descamps led to another result that sheds a new light on Schillebeeckx's conversion hypothesis. In order to get a clear picture of Schillebeeckx's view on the genesis and development of the Easter creed, Descamps enumerated the various stages in Schillebeeckx's reconstruction of the original Easter experience until the official apostolic creed. He came to the following phases: the conversion experience, the identification of Jesus as the eschatological prophet, the four early Christian creeds of which only the most recent one, the 'Easter' Christology, elaborated the idea of resurrection for the first time, the expression of this in the images of the appearances, and finally the appearances stories which in the New Testament were placed anachronistically a few days after Jesus's death.[12] This reconstruction showed that Schillebeeckx's hypothesis of the conversion experience reflected his intention to postpone the idea of a physical resurrection as an expression of the Easter experience until a much later date than the official teaching of the Church does. Descamps interpreted this intention as the outcome of Schillebeeckx's

12 Descamps, "Comptes rendus", 220–221: "Ce schéma serait à peu le suivant. Peu après la mort de Jésus : expérience de conversion à Jésus survivant, puis identification de ce Jésus au prophète eschatologique humilié et exalté, le mode de cette survie et de cette exaltation restant dans le vague aux yeux des disciples, ensuite formations de quatre credos primitifs (…), dont seul le quatrième et le plus récent thematise pour la première fois l'idée précise de résurrection. C'est plus tard seulement que cette idée se serait exprimée dans des images d'apparition du ressuscité et plus tard qu'elle aurait fait objet de récits rédigés, placés d'une manière anachronique au surlendemain de la crucifixion". Schillebeeckx accepts this scheme as generally correct (IE, 73, note 51).

systematic, rather than exegetical interests. This systematic interest consists of the conviction that for modern people the inner, psychologically traceable process of conversion is a better, more acceptable sign of God's activity in human history.[13] Both Descamps and the German theologian Hans Kessler were convinced that Schillebeeckx's conversion theory was wholly compatible with orthodox faith, unlike other reviewers, like Walter Kasper and Werner Löser, who accused him either of a reversion to the Protestant liberal theology or to the reduction of the resurrection faith to a minimum.[14]

The impact of his conversion hypothesis on his resurrection theology as shown by Descamps, is confirmed by Schillebeeckx's own reflection on what he called the ambiguity of the term 'Easter experience' (JE, 359–369). First, he reflected on what experience would mean in this case. The Easter experience was not a purely subjective phenomenon: Jesus himself was its source. Moreover, experience is not just a pre-linguistic item; it is always found in a language context from which it receives its articulation (JE, 359). Conversion was the Christian interpretative element of what Schillebeeckx considered to be the real, historic experience (*ervaringswerkelijkheid*, JN, 322), undergone by the disciples, and seen in the context of the Jewish conversion model. At the same time he also claimed that this was an experience of reality (*werkelijkheidservaring*, JN, 322), the reality of the new initiative of forgiveness by the living Jesus (JE, 360).

If conversion was the articulation of the Easter experience, it followed that the resurrection idea was not self-evidently the earliest and original expression or interpretation of this reality. Other interpretations were also possible, such as the coming of Christ as judge at the end of time in the so-called *parousia* Christology (JE, 360–361). Here the sequence of successive stages of the Easter kerygma, enumerated by Descamps, proved to be relevant. Descamps assumed that in Schillebeeckx's genetic schema the *parousia* Christology preceded the Paschal Christology. This early Christian community did not have an explicit resurrection terminology. Obviously, here Schillebeeckx's view on resurrection

13 Descamps, "Comptes rendus", 221: "D'un point de vue moderne, le processus intérieur de conversion tel que le décrit S. est un bien 'meilleur' signe de l'action divine". At the same dogmatic or apologetic interest of Schillebeeckx's conversion hypothesis hinted H. Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten: Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1985), 182–191: "Edward Schillebeeckx: Ein als Gnade erfahrener Bekehrungsprozess, literarisch dargestellt als Erscheinung", here 191.

14 Walter Kasper, "Liberale Christologie. Zum Jesus-Buch von Edward Schillebeeckx's", *Evangelische Kommentare* 6 (1976), 357–360; Werner Löser, "Christologie zwischen kirchlichem Glauben und modernem Bewusstsein", *Theologie und Philosophie* 51 (1976), 257–266. Cf. Schillebeeckx's reaction in IE, 23–30; 78–81.

was challenged. Although in answer to Descamps he stated that there was not just one homogeneous early Easter tradition succeeded by three others, but that there were more diverse early Christian communities at the same time that mutually influenced one another (JE, 73–74), nevertheless he seemed to agree with Leo Bakker's reconstruction that it was a small step from the pre-Easter identification of Jesus as the eschatological prophet to the *maranatha* or *parousia* Christology of Jesus's coming at the end of time.[15] Bakker also questioned the self-evidence of the resurrection idea. In the Jewish context, the expectation of a resurrection in the present could not be presupposed. Schillebeeckx agreed with him in as far as his analysis of the non-apocalyptic late Jewish literature (JE, 477–491) showed that the Christian idea of resurrection "differs radically from the notion of 'coming back alive to our world'" (JE, 362).

To end this section I quote a passage in which Schillebeeckx connected the conversion model with its Jewish context. In this context the resurrection idea, in its traditional form as in the apostolic kerygma, was not yet self-evident:

> In the creedal affirmation [of the first Christians] 'He is risen' the determining factor is their recollection of Jesus's days on earth and their experience of salvation through conversion; but to express this reality in words the whole tradition of Judaic religious experience was almost as important (JE, 486).

Investigating the conversion model that Schillebeeckx used finally comes down to asking whether he could question effectively the self-evidence of the resurrection creed of the official Church. Descamps considered as 'defensible' the thesis that the conversion experience preceded the image and terminology of the resurrection, and he thought that it was the most innovative contribution that the book *Jesus* had brought about.[16] At the same time he and Kessler were convinced that they could prove that the exegetical basis of this conversion thesis was very weak if not non-existent.[17] What remains is that the

15 L. Bakker, "Het oudtestamentisch tegoed van de christelijke theologie", W. Beuken et al. (eds.) *Proef en toets. Theologie als experiment* (Amersfoort: De Horstink 1977), 86–102; here 88–90; Schillebeeckx declared that "the reconstruction of my line of thought is more accurately [than Descamps] reproduced by Bakker", IE, 73, note 51.

16 Descamps, "Comptes rendus", 220: "Nous croyons cette thèse defendable, et cela sera peut-être là – du moins pour un grand nombre, – l'acquisition la plus nouvelle de leur lecteur de ce 'Jezus'".

17 Descamps, "Comptes rendus", esp. 218; 222. Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten*, 191.

conversion model has theological and apologetic value as mediation between the earthly Jesus and the official apostolic resurrection creed.

4 Conclusion

At the end of my contribution, I can now summarize the effect of Schillebeeckx's use of the model of conversion in his reconstruction of the Easter experience. Three elements are crucial here.

First and foremost, Schillebeeckx used 'conversion' as a model to link the post-Easter experience of the disciples with their pre-Easter fellowship with the earthly Jesus, using elements of the Jewish conversion scheme. He did this in order to avoid using the concept and the images of the resurrection too early on. This way he created room for an understanding of God's new initiative after Jesus's death, which is more intelligible and acceptable for modern humanity. This working hypothesis was part of his hermeneutical approach to the historical Jesus and had a clearly apologetic intention. Conversion was not used here in the common sense, but was the expression of the forgiving and appealing encounter of the disciples with the living Jesus. As a human experience it had a subjective, 'interiorizing' character that enabled Schillebeeckx to generalize what the disciples had gone through and to apply this to present-day Christians as well (JE, 608). No "hocus pocus, supernatural invasion, crude, naïve realism" (JE, 315) were presupposed, as the images of the appearances suggested. Schillebeeckx's critical dealing with the empty tomb made it clear that resurrection was not the reanimation of a corpse. The eschatological character of Jesus's physical resurrection was quite different from the late Judaic apocalyptic notion (JE, 306). 'An eschatological, bodily resurrection, theologically speaking, has nothing to do with a corpse' (JE, 308, note 17). This seems to pave the way for a modern understanding of the resurrection.

Next, the model of conversion, as Schillebeeckx used it, was not a purely subjective interpretation of Jesus's life, as theologians such as Kasper and Löser had feared. The creative and saving activity of Jesus's God presents itself on every page of *Jesus*. How did Schillebeeckx combine his historical, genetic approach with his theological faith in God's creative presence in the world? This was his own question right from the start of his project, which he defined as searching for possible signs in the historical Jesus that referred to the saving action undertaken by God in this Jesus of Nazareth (JE, 84). In the fourth part of his book, he returned explicitly to this question under the heading: 'God's saving action in history' (JE, 589–597). There he distinguished two ways of speaking about the same reality: by using profane, e.g. historical language and

by using religious language. They are not mutually exclusive as most of our contemporaries in Western Europe tend to assume.[18] For believers, human persons are as much 'beings of God' as they are autonomous, history-making persons. Being of God and being oneself are 'total aspects of one and the same reality' (JE, 591). This means that when God acts in history as a source of salvation, as Schillebeeckx claimed he does, specifically in Jesus, this is not an intervention in the normal course of history (supernatural hocus-pocus etc.), rather "it *is* this so-called 'profane history', but in its 'total' aspect of 'being of God'" (JE, 595). The post-Easter conversion of the disciples could, therefore, be investigated with a purely historical approach and at the same time be disclosed by the believer as an act of God and interpreted as well as expressed in religious language. Mind you: by *believers*. Seeing the conversion of the disciples not as something purely human and subjective, Schillebeeckx also asked for a conversion from secular contemporaries, a conversion in the common denotation of leaving one's former life-style and entering a new one. Does this mean that the whole enterprise of deducing from the New Testament texts on resurrection how a conversion might come about as a human reaction to Jesus's life and death has no real apologetic value? I would not say so. Schillebeeckx's (very well expounded) view on how God acts as an immanent force in the empirical world bridges the gap between an age in which faith in God was self-evident and our age of 'structural atheism'.[19]

Finally the question ought to be raised: has Schillebeeckx's construction of a conversion as the original Easter experience been accepted? Reviewers who were sympathetic to his historical, genetic approach, such as Descamps and Kessler, have been unanimous in dismantling its exegetical basis. Descamps did so by leaving no room in the New Testament accounts for a separate phase of the experience of conversion and forgiveness and by systematically questioning Schillebeeckx's distinction of four different early creedal tendencies. Kessler showed that practically the only text in which the conversion terminology is used, Luke 22,31–32, belongs, according to many exegetes, to a tradition that did not know of Peter's denial of his master. From their traditional orthodox standpoint, Kasper and Löser did not support Schillebeeckx's conversion theory. This theory has in fact not received much attention and hardly any followers. Even in Schillebeeckx's later work, the reference to the post-Easter

18 Cf. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, who calls them 'exclusivist humanists'.

19 JE, esp. 591–596. Cf. Taylor's effort to show that in our secular age too, a natural tendency towards transcendence can be demonstrated. 'Structural atheism' was used by Schillebeeckx's former colleague at the Theological Faculty of Nijmegen, Arend van Leeuwen.

experience of the disciples as a conversion did not play a significant role. In the last chapter of his *Interim Report*, where he had defended this reconstruction so eloquently, he already seemed to have forgotten his former plea for it as a working hypothesis: he did not even mention the word conversion when he confessed his belief in Jesus risen from the dead (IE, 117–120). Perhaps he has recognized the exegetical weakness of his hypothesis. However, the fact that he kept describing resurrection belief as "the recognition of the intrinsic and irrevocable significance of Jesus's proclamation of the Kingdom of God" (IE, 117) and thereby maintained one of the main arguments for putting forward his hypothesis of the post-Easter conversion of the disciples, shows that this hypothesis certainly has had its value in his reflection on the Christian resurrection faith.

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CHAPTER 2

The Presence of the Absent: Augustine and Deification

Matthias Smalbrugge

1 Deification as an Ecumenical Theme

The matter of ecclesial unity has been the focus of Henk Witte's research for many years.[1] How can divergent churches maintain the fragile equilibrium between diversity and unity? What is the complex relation between local diversity and universal unity? Being Roman Catholic himself, Witte is familiar with the answers his own church has formulated to these questions. Yet he also knows these answers were only accepted by that Church after profound reflection, fierce debates and much hesitation, all of which have left their traces. To him, this means that the debates that produced the answers are at least as valuable as the answers themselves. Answers, in his view, are not meant to end the debates. Rather, they appeal to an ongoing reflection that a Church will always need. They are mere signposts, meant to clarify the position of the Church on issues big and small. This idea of the answers as signs of an ongoing reflection implies that these are signs in the classical sense, *signa* referring to a *res*. The *signum* represents the *res*, but it cannot fully embody it. As a consequence, other signs may also represent the same *res*.

This, I believe, has been essential to the way in which Witte conceived his theological and ecumenical responsibility. He loves his church and is willing to take her answers to the various different theological questions extremely serious. At the same time, he is ready to consider them as *signa*, which do not necessarily exclude the possibility that other *signa* might also potentially refer to a *res*, in the fullest sense of the word. This dynamic attitude between unity and diversity is a hallmark of Witte's theology. He is looking for the nuances: if no clear and definitive truth can be formulated, we need nuance. This brings me to the subject of this article: the differences and nuances, as well as the

* Parts of this article have been presented at the XVIIth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 2015.

1 H. Witte, "Building Ecumenical Community At The Local Level. A Case Study", L.J. Koffeman, H. Witte (eds.), *Of All Times and of All Places: Protestants and Catholics on The Church Local and Universal* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2001), 207–231.

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ecumenical implications of Western and Eastern Church traditions when they speak about deification.

Deification is an important topic in modern theology, particularly with regard to Augustinian theology. It was long considered to be a typical subject of Eastern theology, a doctrine that could only be a misappropriation in Western theology.[2] This is certainly how the Protestant reformers saw it, for they considered it to be a kind of anomaly.[3] To them, it did not seem to be a biblical notion at all, even though Paul clearly spoke about *huiothesia*. This *huiothesia* was an act of God however, depending entirely on His grace, whereas the doctrine of deification seemed to suggest that man was capable of gaining a divine future by his own capacities. Today's outlook is different, however, and deification – certainly the way it appears in the works of Augustine – has become a serious matter of discussion.[4] What does it mean? Why does Augustine use the word – though he only mentions it eighteen times? And finally, why did he use the word in the first place?[5]

Recent publications by Norman Russel[6] and David Meconi[7] answer some of these questions, as they highlight many aspects of the Augustinian concept

2 About this supposed difference between the Eastern and Western theological tradition, see in particular the wonderful article by K. Hennessy, "An Answer to De Régnon's Accusers: Why we should not speak of his Paradigm", *Harvard Theological Review* 100(2007), 179–97. She explains that this difference seems to be due to De Régnon's *Etudes Théologiques*, but that in reality this was not the case and that the difference between Eastern emphasis on the Threeness of God and the Western insistence on the unity of the divine, is grossly overestimated.

3 See, M.J. Christensen, J. Wittung (eds.), *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); P. Gavrilyuk, "The Retrieval of Deification: How a Once-Despised Archaism Became an Ecumenical Desideratum", *Modern Theology* 25(2009), 647–59.

4 Recently, the Roman roots of the notion of deification have also been highlighted by S. Cole, *Cicero and The Rise of Deification at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). See also D. Zeller (ed.), *Menschwerdung Gottes und Vergöttlichung von Menschen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).

5 M. Wisse, *Trinitarian Theology beyond Participation: Augustine's* De Trinitate *and Contemporary Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), especially, 'Deification in Contemporary Theology and Augustine', 301–314, considers this growing interest as a phenomenon due to the modern wish to place God in the very heart of human existence. See also, e.g. M. Drever, *Image, Identity and The Forming of the Augustinian Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

6 N. Russel, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic* Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

7 D. Meconi, *The One Christ: St. Augustine's Theology of Deification* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013); D. Meconi, "Becoming Gods by Becoming God's: Augustine's Mystagogy of Identification", *Augustinian Studies* 39 (2008), 61–74.

of deification. Yet, in spite of these recent publications, and the new insights they provide, research has mainly held fast to the approach developed by Gerald Bonner in his famous article from 1986, aptly entitled "Augustine's Conception of Deification".[8] His conclusion, which has since has been confirmed by other authors, is that the Augustinian concept of deification is a manifold notion. It should certainly not be regarded as a notion or a word he has somehow borrowed from Eastern sources, for it has its own dynamics and is firmly rooted in Augustine's theology. It has both biblical and neo-platonic roots, focuses on *participation* and represents a gift that is bestowed by *grace* and *adoption*. We may become gods, but only by the grace of the one who deifies. No one is able to bring about his or her own deification. At least, that is what he appears to assert at first glance, and it would be coherent with the anti-Pelagian stance of Augustine's later theology. In his own words: "for it is clear that when He calls us gods, He deified us by grace, we are not born of his substance".[9] This implies that the process of deification also represents a *justification* and, as such, deification is an integral part of Augustinian soteriology. However, this salvation is not accessible to all. It is strictly reserved for those who belong to the Church and even within that holy community, it is only granted to the *electi*. Finally, deification can only be achieved in the afterlife. In short, deification seems to be a term mainly used to highlight once more the omnipotence of God's grace.[10] Moreover, not only does it fit perfectly within the framework of the doctrine of grace, it also seamlessly adapts itself to the doctrine of predestination. Even Meconi, insisting on deification as the perfection of creation, remains faithful to the idea that humanity is integrated into the *totus Christus* by the grace of the Holy Spirit, combining Christology, trinitarianism and predestination. So in this view, Augustinian deification is not a notion showing a particular capacity of humanity for gaining divine existence, but a way of emphasizing human dependence upon God's grace. We can participate in God's life, but such participation remains a gift from God: it is His act of justification and salvation. At least, this is what Augustine seems to propose.

8 G. Bonner, "Augustine's Conception of Deification", *Journal of Theological Studies* 37(1986), 369–386.

9 *Enn. in Ps*. 49,2.

10 The notion of grace can be seen as the continuing story in Augustine's theology. See C. Harrison, *Augustine. Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); L. Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

This strong emphasis on soteriology does leave us with some questions, however: is it really correct to suppose that the metaphor of deification is nothing more than just another way of emphasizing the importance of grace? Are we justified in once again considering the notion of grace to be the decisive element in Augustinian thought?

2 Divinity and Number

Augustine's choice of words might also show us some other directions than those leading to the notion of grace. Augustine mentions deification in his *Enarationes in Psalmos* 146, saying that man can *participate* in God, but it is unclear what this actually means. This question is not an easy one to answer. He starts his argument by introducing the theme of the incomprehensibility of God. God is, of course, someone who cannot be understood and whose existence lies beyond all human categories.[11] This gap between God and man can only be bridged by an act of God. Yet, to Augustine, this is not an act of grace, but an act of creation. According to him, God has to pour Himself out in us: "*atque utinam infundat se nobis*". The choice of words is somewhat remarkable: a pouring-out is something quite different from creation. Moreover, God has to illuminate us, so that we can understand that we cannot understand Him. Given our finite intelligence – the complete opposite of God's unlimited intelligence – the only remaining possibility is participation in God.[12] This 'participation' is not meant to suggest that we can actually lay hands on a part of God, however. Participation has nothing to do with owning a part of God, or sharing in his being.[13] That would be contrary to the idea of God's unity. In Him, no separate parts can be distinguished and there are no shares we can appropriate. His is a very peculiar type of unity that, although it is one, does not equal a number. This is essential to Augustine. God's unity has nothing

11 *En. in Ps*. 146, *Magnus Dominus noster.* "Impletus est gaudio, eructauit ineffabiliter: nescio quid dicere non ualebat; et cogitare quomodo ualebat? *Magnus dominus noster, et magna uirtus eius, et intellegentiae eius non est numerus.* Ille ipse qui numerat multitudinem stellarum, numerari non potest: *Magnus Dominus noster, et magna uirtus eius, et intellegentiae eius non est numerus.* Quis hoc exponat? quis digne vel cogitet quod dictum est: *Et intellegentiae eius non est numerus?"*

12 Ibid., "Conticescant humanae uoces, requiescant humanae cogitationes: ad incomprehensibilia non se extendant quasi comprehensuri, sed tamquam participaturi; participes enim erimus. Non hoc quod capimus erimus, nec totum capiemus: sed participes erimus".

13 Ibid., "Participes ergo erimus: nemo dubitet, Scriptura hoc dixit. Et cuius rei participes erimus, quasi partes sint apud Deum, aut per partes dividatur Deus?"

to do with a unity that might be considered as the beginning of all numbers. He is One, certainly, but even though He is One, He is not the beginning of Three. His unity should be regarded as the fount from which all numbers flow. In that sense, Augustine is quite clear: the Trinity cannot be seen as a unity in which the Father would be the source of the three persons. Instead, God's unity is undivided and cannot be associated with the number 'one'. But there is more. Not only is God's unity not the same as the number one, He cannot even be counted: "*numerari non potest*". This is yet another affirmation of God's incomprehensibility. Therefore, it is impossible to explain how everything that can be numbered, i.e. our manifold reality, participates in the One and Only, something Augustine calls the *unius simplicis*.[14]

The problem has strong platonic and neo-platonic overtones: how can manifold reality be linked to a unity that has no multiplicity in it? It stands to reason Augustine links numbers (or the impossibility of a number) to the problem of the incomprehensibility of God. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that he uses such an ordinary *topos* about God's incomprehensibility to revive the neo-platonic approach of this complexity. He is, in fact, conducting a philosophical investigation into the relation between numbers and intelligence and continues his argument in the same philosophical vein. He takes it a step further when he writes that it is not only true that God cannot be numbered but that, equally important, God's intelligence is without number: "*intelligentiae eius non est numerus*". The doctor of grace frequently repeats this phrase in this sermon – in fact, it is a wordplay referring to psalm 146.[15] By this, he does not mean that we cannot understand God because understanding is always about numbers. Instead, he seems to refer to the second person of the Trinity when he speaks of 'intelligence'. He does not stop there, however. After this wordplay, Augustine proceeds to explain that everything in our reality can be counted, which is the very purpose of numbers, even though the number in itself is absolutely uncountable: "*numerari numerus nullo pacto potest*".

So Augustine leaves us with three elements of God's existence that cannot be described in numerical terms. First, God's unity has nothing to do with a number. Therefore, God is someone who cannot be enumerated, i.e. he is not an individual like a person is. Individuals are of course unique, but they are countable. We can say that there are four people in the room and 132 in a church. God is a unity unto Himself and cannot be counted. Secondly, God's intelligence is not quantifiable. This may seem odd at first, but in fact Augustine merely says that the second person of the Trinity cannot be counted either. Of

14 Ibid., "*Quis ergo explicat quomodo sint participes unius simplicis multi?*"

15 Cf. *In Ioan Eu. Tr.*, 39,4.

course, God is able to count and to quantify. Yet still, the Trinity as such has nothing to do with numbers and the second person of the Trinity, Christ, is not comparable to a second person side by side with the Father, as if they were individuals. This implies that we have to take a closer look at Augustine's concept of *intelligentia*. It remains within the divine unity and although it can be distinguished from the first person, it is not merely the second number in the Trinity. It is an intelligence of God that expresses the divine unity. Its role is solely to express this very specific unity that cannot be associated with a number. Finally, even if we do speak in numerical terms, we have to realize that the number of the 'entity' within the Trinity itself cannot be quantified. In that sense, the number can be equated and compared to the mystery of the divinity itself. It exists and it can even be named, but it cannot be expressed in terms of its own being. 'God' is a notion and a reality that exists, but at the same time, God is a reality that literally cannot be accounted for.

So the argument runs as follows. God is a unity and though unity normally speaking has to do with numbers, this unity is not a number and it cannot even be understood in terms of numbers. We cannot say that the three persons of the Trinity are like three individuals. In the end, the number we are talking about cannot be quantified. It implies that the world of the manifold (*i.e.* the world of numbers) cannot be understood in the real sense of the word, it cannot be understood on its own terms. The reality of numbers is beyond number, the reality of the One who is uncountable is also beyond number and cannot be accounted for. However logical this argument may seem, it is remarkably neo-platonic. To be clear, this last remarkable phrase, "*numerari numerus nullo pacto potest*", evidently recalls the plotinian description of the One in *Enneads* VI, 5,4: "it is not counted at all". Plotinus even added in *Enn*. VI, 7,15 that the One, being not a number whilst it would be predicable, is offering from itself what it does not possess itself: number. After also having posited that number itself cannot be numbered, Augustine continues in the same vein, stating that: "What then is next to Him, where does he make what he has made, for it is said 'that in measure, number and weight thou hast disposed'?"[16] It is an allusion to the divine Threeness, which is not a number, but bears the name of a number. It cannot be a number because it must remain equal to the One that is no num-

16 Ibid., "Si quidquid numeratur, numero numeratur; numeri non potest esse numerus, numerari numerus nullo pacto potest. Quid ergo est apud deum, unde fecit omnia, et ubi fecit omnia, cui dicitur: *Omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuisti*? Aut quis ipsam mensuram, et ipsum numerum, et ipsum pondus, ubi deus omnia disposuit, aut numerare potest, aut metiri, aut appendere?"

ber. In that sense, the One God is offering from Himself what He himself does not possess: a language which cannot but express itself in numbers.

So what we have here is a passage about deification in terms of participation, in which Augustine is clearly inspired by the neo-platonic definition of the One: The One is not a number (it can't be counted at all), it is the principle of simplicity. In his own words: *unus simplex*. Secondly, his phrase "*intelligentiae eius non est numerus*" recalls the Greek concept of *nous*, because it defines the One who is not a number. Finally, the fact that Augustine does not speak of a creating God, but of the one God pouring Himself out into the multitude of mankind, at the very least seems to be the result of his neo-platonic vocabulary.

What Augustine describes in this sermon, however, is not the type of participation in which humanity and God share the same substance. There is no question of an ontology bridging the gap between God and man. Protestant theologians who suspect that deification is in fact about an ontology bridging this distance between God and man may rest assured. Apparently, there is no common ground between God and man. Even at the level of understanding, there is no common ground: Augustine insists on the fact that human language, as it expresses itself in quantifiable terms, is unable to comprehend God's unity. So, ontologically speaking, a germane distance between God and humanity is upheld. Strikingly, the alternative we normally find in Augustine – grace as an acting force, being able to raise man to the height of the infinite presence of the divine – is not mentioned here either! Instead of introducing 'grace', he speaks about a God 'pouring Himself out' in humankind. So what we see is a sophisticated play on numbers, reality, substance, individuality and understanding, which culminates in the conclusion that the number itself cannot be numbered. Hence, the ultimate reality 'outnumbers' our intelligence, but at the same time it remains intimately linked to the world of numbers that forms the realm of our understanding. Yet, this continuity cannot be presented in ontological terms, linking God to humanity in terms of being. Nevertheless, it would be a failure not to observe that this passage is at odds with the doctrine of grace. What seems to become clear in this sermon is the fact that apparently there is no relation between the theology of grace and this theology of numbers.

This leaves us with some preliminary observations about deification as *participatio*, but it provides no clues as to what kind of participation this might be. There is a relation between the divine simplicity and the world of numbers, but we cannot define it properly. The only word that comes across is the word *infundat*. God pours Himself out, shaping a world that is fundamentally different from his own being. So what we can observe is the fact that there is a complex relation between the world of numbers (*i.e.* quantification,

mathematics) and the world of the divine Trinity that expresses itself in terms of numbers but can in no way be numbered.

3 Image

Where does Augustine's argument go from here? Further on in the same sermon, he observes that humanity should maintain a certain similitude with God and if necessary, reform itself to able to do so. The verb he applies is *reformare*.[17] If asked how humanity can reform itself, the answer sounds: by confessing and by doing good works.[18] These good works have to be performed, because God also grants us the ability to realize them, as human beings have been created in God's image. This divine image, born within ourselves, must be a rational image. Otherwise we would not be able to call upon God: "*non nouit anima inuocare deum, nisi sola rationalis*", or put differently: "*rationale animal te Deus fecit*".[19] This entails that the *image* becomes a pivotal element in the process of approaching God in such a way that the resemblance remains intact. The more humankind remains an image of God, the more one stays within the similitude that he or she has to adopt in their life. So, does the notion of the image help us understand the continuity we observed between God and humanity, without calling it an ontological continuity? Would this help us to understand what deification might also entail, apart from mere participation?

When he returns to the subject of deification in another sermon, *Enn. in Ps*. 49, Augustine explains that humanity can attain this similitude with God, but similitude is certainly not the same as equality. For the one who deifies can only be God by himself and not through participation. So, even deified, we are not God's equals. We only resemble Him and our deification is realized by the grace of adoption, not by nature of birth (*naturae generantis*). Here we seem to return to the well-known scheme of deification functioning as an element in the doctrine of grace, insisting on the difference between God and humanity. But again, things may be more complicated than they seem at first. Indeed, there is no equality between man and God but, as Augustine states in *De Trinitate*, X, 12.19, we have to ascend to that essence whose unequal image we

17 Ibid., "Dissimiles facti recesserunt; reformati redeant. Unde, inquit, reformabimur? Quando reformabimur?"

18 Ibid., "Hinc incipe, si uis peruenire ad intellegentiam perspicuam ueritatis. Si uis a uia fidei perduci ad possessionem speciei, incipe in confessione. Te prius accusa; te accusato, Deum lauda …. Post confessionem quid? Sequantur bona opera".

19 S. 126, 2,3.

are. Nevertheless, we may take pride in being its image: "*impar imago, sed tamen imago*". There is a kind of twofold nature in the image: it is not what it reflects – yet it is what it reflects. Augustine builds upon this with another metaphor in *De Trinitate*, XIV, 15.21, namely the metaphor of the signet ring: the signet ring leaves an image in the wax, and yet the image remains in the ring. Again, the wax is not what it reflects, and then again, it is. The wax however, is vulnerable and can be damaged, implying that it has to be renewed.

Surprisingly, in *De Trinitate*, grace is not the only way that God may rehabilitate. In *De Trinitate*, XIV, 8.11, Augustine argues that by the very quality of being God's image, that image is capable of participating in God. Apparently, there already is always a strong relation, even without grace. This idea culminates in *De Trinitate*, XIV, 14.20, where he writes that "the image of God is in itself so powerful that it is capable of cleaving to Him whose image it is".[20] Again, the relation seems to be very strong, even without mentioning the element of grace. Grace does not seem to be necessary, because the image contains an internal force that enables it to stick to God. It is within humanity's own power to remain within the similitude that ties a creature to its Creator. This makes it all the more important to know how this relation can be described. If it cannot be described in ontological terms, then how can it be described as the relating force between humanity and God? Ultimately, the question as to what kind of participation this is, is left unanswered.

Rather than formulating an answer, Augustine radically changes his tone. He suddenly insists that the image has to be reformed by its Creator and that it cannot reform itself in the same way as it was able to realize its own deformation.[21] So, without having resolved the question about the very nature of the relation between God and man, we now see that the relation itself changes in that it can no longer subsist without an intervening God. The idea of an image that always carries in it the possibility of 'clinging' to God, seems to have disappeared. If such is the case, we are faced with a double question: are we able to reform ourselves, or do we have to be reformed? And correspondingly, is grace no longer the pivotal notion in the relation between God and humanity? Is it instead thanks to God that humanity can be reformed and can remain within the similitude with his Creator?

I would like to argue that, if one follows *De Trinitate*, XIV, 16.22, it is clear that the image according to which we have to be 'reformed' is none other than the

20 "Qua in se imagine dei tam potens est, ut ei cuius imago est ualeat inhaerere".

21 *De Trin*., XIV,16,22, "Non enim reformare se ipsam potest, sicut potuit deformare".

image that has to be reformed.[22] The model and its reflection are identifiable, but Augustine does not mean that the reflection participates in a higher reality, that there would be some kind of common ground. Ontologically, God and man do not share a common form of being. That is not what his use of 'image' implies. Instead, Augustine tries to show that it is the reflection that proves the existence, the presence and the truth of the model. The image is essential to the model. If the model becomes clearer, and if its power becomes more visible, this is owed to the reflection. Admittedly, his use of the word 'image' becomes somewhat distorted. We are apparently dealing with an equivocal notion. From one perspective, 'image' is that which has to be reformed and, conversely, the other perspective states that it is none other than the model according to which the image has to be reformed. This seems to lock us into a hermeneutical circle that unfortunately does not allow us to move from point A to B in order to obtain some new information about this very image in question. What are its dynamics, allowing it to gain some other outlook than it had formerly? Do we speak of the power of grace? Or does the image, being the model according to which we have to be reformed, have an inner force, creating its own reformation? Where can we find some solution to this equivocal use of the notion of 'image' in order to obtain a clear understanding of what is meant by deification? Are we able to come nearer to God once we remember what we are, i.e. His image? Or are we completely dependent on His intervention, and will there always be this unbridgeable difference between God and man, implying that deification is nothing other than God's grace that allows us to be renewed?

4 Deification as the Image that Cannot Be Imagined

By way of conclusion, I would like to return to the idea that the image is something in itself, without being the model of that which it represents as an image. Or to put it more concisely: it is and it is not. It simultaneously is truth and the absence of truth. Augustine's first utterance about the dynamics of an image that represents something without adequately being what it represents, is in his earliest work, the *Soliloquia*. There he wrote that a picture can only be true if the thing that it represents is false. Take, for example, a picture of a horse. What you see is not a true horse, but a 'false' one. Nevertheless, the image itself is true. The same goes for a mirror: if a man reflected in a mirror was not a

22 De Trin., XIV, 16,22, "Non itaque sic intellegamus, *secundum imaginem eius qui creavit eum*, quasi alia sit imago secundum quam renovatur, non ipsa quae renovatur".

mirror image, i.e. a false representation, it could never be a true image. This culminates in some striking phrases about tragedy, in which Augustine ponders whether one can only be a true character if one is prepared to be a false one.[23] In such clauses, one discovers an inner dynamic in the notion of 'image' that has very little to do with the notion of grace. Instead it is comparable to the notion of a number that cannot itself be numbered. An 'image' cannot itself be imagined without being deprived of its own character: otherwise it would end up being an original rather than an image. The core of the image, however, is the presence of the absent: the reflection renders the existence of the model true, and the shadow makes the elusiveness of pure light visible.

Paradoxically, this seems to be the true dynamic of the image: it cannot be imagined, for that would make it a model. But then again, it proves the existence of the model, and although it is false itself, it does provide proof of the truth. Precisely this paradox constitutes the essential elements of Augustinian deification. It reveals the truth of the divine essence without being able to be identified with this truth. It can never become the model after which it has been created. One might say that the image participates in the model, while such participation in no way implies that it shares in its actual being. Augustine develops a very subtle way of discussing a reality that is not ours. Linguistic discourse reveals its utter incorrectness, yet precisely through its falsehood, it is able to reveal the truth. It is true in so far as it reveals the essence of deification. Deification is not 'being like God'. On the contrary, it is being unlike God and thus disclosing His essence. Deification, therefore, is the return to the very essence of the image: being false in order to reveal the truth. Deification as a process is not primarily due to grace, to Christ, but essentially to its own inner dynamics. This, in turn, is comparable to the mechanism of a number, finally reflecting in a perfect way the One that is no number.

Such an interpretation of Augustinian deification does indeed diminish the role of grace. To the least, it rules out grace as the only decisive element in Augustine's theology: there is also an element in human existence that remains present, regardless of what that concrete existence is like. All the while, it is not to our merit that this element remains present. It is simply something that cannot be removed from human existence. This is a fundamentally neo-platonic approach, in which the One remains present in all the emanations that can only reflect what they are not. Such an approach seems to be preserved by Augustine, even if he insists on the role of grace. In fact, this perspective honors human existence and characterizes it – to a much greater extent than the

23 *Sol.* II,10,18: "*Quo pacto iste quem commemoraui, uerus tragoedus esset, si nollet esse falsus Hector, falsa Andromache, falsus Hercules et alia innumerabilia?*"

traditional Protestant view – as an existence that has been called upon to reflect its Creator. Yet, this approach has nothing to do with the idea of humankind becoming God and almost becoming equal to Him, since an image is never identifiable with its model, at the risk of losing its own characteristics. In the end, this is perhaps how Henk Witte has always considered the nature of theology: a reflection that is called to be in line with the truth, but cannot be identified with it.

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CHAPTER 3

"It's Better, Then, I Arm Myself with Foresight": Dante on the Relationship between Conversion and Belief in Providence

Wiel Logister

In the Divine Comedy, Dante describes the conversion process that he undergoes when his life has brought him to the edge of a dark wood.[1] His conversion requires an understanding of evil, of the process of purification, and of the way in which love moves the sun and the stars. Being an acute phenomenologist, he describes the different facets of this process. He discusses not only the struggle to expose the nature of evil and how to adequately approach it (*Inferno*), but also the confrontation with the virtues of Mary and the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount (*Purgatorio*), and finally the implications of the union with God (*Paradiso*). It becomes apparent that conversion is an extensive and lengthy affair.

A notable topic in the heaven of Mars (Par., 14,84–18,63) is what he calls *provedenza*, *providenza* or *provvidenza*. See, for example, when he hears the summons, in the exact middle of Paradiso (17,109), to follow in the footsteps of the Crucified Jesus and poetically express his views on the way in which the tree of life can either blossom or grow crooked.[2] This takes place shortly after the last Crusade, while he is contemplating his family's past and the socioeconomic, political, and ecclesiastic developments in Florence and elsewhere in Italy. To live up to his calling, he needs to arm himself with *provedenza*, even though *fortuna* confronts him with serious problems. Exactly what this entails is the subject of this article.

1 In line with John Freccero, who places the Comedy in the tradition of Saint Augustine's Confessions, in his *The Poetics of Conversion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Jennifer Petrie asserts that, "Conversion is seen not merely as a topic forming part of the content of Dante's works but as structurally significant and bound up with the literary forms Dante uses, especially those of autobiographical narrative and of figural allegory", in her article "Conversion", R. Lansing (ed.), *The Dante Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2010), 222.

2 Henceforth I will mention only the number of the Canto and the verse in the references to Paradiso unless this results in confusion.

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First, I will explain the story line of the heaven of Mars. Next, against the background of Dante's comments on *fortuna*, and thirdly I will elaborate on his views on *provedenza*. Then follows a section on the relationship between ancestry and vocation, and finally I will discuss his criticism of life in thirteenth century Florence.

1 The Story Line

After his arrival in the heaven of Mars (14,82ff.), Dante claims that martyrs are more exalted than the confessors and theologians in the heaven of the Sun. This is because they have followed their hearts rather than their intellects (88–90), and have shown great dedication. Dante describes a radiant Greek cross (99–101) in which martyrs move up and down (109–111) while singing hymns about arising and conquering (118–126). Three times the rhyme-word *Cristo* sounds (104,106, 108) as a battle cry for crusaders.

The atmosphere of calm and harmony at the beginning of chant 15 contrasts with the turmoil that is caused when people allow the temporary to prevail over the eternal (10–12) – a prelude to the difference between *fortuna* and *provedenza*. One of the warriors/martyrs makes himself known as Cacciaguida, one of Dante's ancestors, born in 1091 and killed in 1149 during the second Crusade.[3] They meet shortly after the last Crusaders' stronghold in the Holy Land, Akko, has been lost. However, in Dante's view, Pope Boniface VIII shows no interest whatsoever in this tragic situation (125–141). He has forgotten all about Joshua's entry into the promised land (9,123–124), followed by the renewal of the covenant at Gilgal (Josh: 5,10). According to *Inferno* 27,87–90, he trades with Jews and Saracens but fights Christians. Dante hopes that the Vatican and Rome will soon be free from 'the adultery of Boniface' (9,139–142) and that people will remember Nazareth where Gabriel 'once opened wide his wings' (9,137–138). In the fulfillment of this expectation, he needs to be a special kind of Crusader.

At the start of his encounter with Dante, Cacciaguida speaks of the Triune God (15,47) – a reference to the Christian experience of God and an indication that the Christian God, and not the Roman deity is at the centre of the heaven of Mars. Cacciaguida has read about the election of one of his descendants in the book of this God, and realizes that he now finds that person in front of him

3 Because Pope Eugene III had guaranteed that those who died along the way would be considered martyrs, J. Philips, *Holy Warriors: a Modern History of the Crusades* (London: Random House, 2009), 104.

(15,46–54). Their conversation reminds us of an episode in Hades when Anchises informs Aeneas about his mission regarding Rome (Virgil, *Aeneid VI*, 851–892). Dante's encounter with Cacciaguida has similar elements: the job description, the encouragement to be assertive, the circumstances in the land and the city.[4]

Cacciaguida's words in 15,88–89, "O branch of my tree, the mere expectancy of whose arrival here gave me delight", are also a reminder of the voice from heaven during Jesus's baptism: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mk. 1,11). These words imply an assignment that will only succeed thanks to "a metamorphosis of the self" and a "thoroughgoing *askesis* modeled after Christ's sacrifice on the cross" (Schnapp, 213). Cacciaguida recounts that he was baptized in the chapel of John the Baptist back when the people of Florence were still of high moral standing (15,97–108), and now he shares in eternal peace. Dante will have similar experiences: leaving Florence, going into exile, speaking up for Heaven's sake, and finding peace in the fulfillment of his arduous task.

In Canto 16, Cacciaguida talks of his family and the sociopolitical history of thirteenth century Florence. He points out that the homogeneity of the city has disappeared and complains that the sheepfold of St. John (25) has been led astray by *fortuna* (84). As a result, the spiritual centre of the city has been moved from St. John's baptistery to Mars's torso near the Ponte Vecchio. Discord reigns. Life is dominated by the bloody battle between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines.

Canto 17 refers to Vergil's earlier prediction that Dante's future would be far from easy (21). 'On the point at which all times are present' (17–18 = God), Cacciaguida predicts 'what fortune now draws near to him' (26). Driven from Florence, he will 'taste the saltiness of bread by another's hand – as, too, how

4 J. Schnapp underlines the difference between Anchises in Hades and Cacciaguida in heaven. Anchises is *ombra*, 'a figure enclosed within the blindness and flux of earthly perspectives: a limitation which extends to the entire worldview of Classical civilization, its god of poetry and prophecy included'. See J. Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History at the Center of Dante's Paradise* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 144–145. Cacciaguida on the other hand is *stelle, flame, lume*, because he sees life in the light of the Biblical God (cf. 17,37–39). Trinity, Incarnation, and Cross constitute 'the depths of his glory, his paradise' (15,35–56). Also noteworthy is the difference between Cacciaguida and Brunetto Latini, Dante's former teacher, who predicts his exile in Inf. 15. They are on courteous terms. Twice Latini calls him his son (31 and 36) and Dante ascribes paternal traits to him (83). Latini mentions the *fortuna* that will fall to him (46). Dante is willing to use this term, 'so long as conscience does not chide' (92–93); if and when it does, he might have to reconsider. Unlike Cacciaguida, Latini as a thinker and writer had no thought for the foolishness of the Cross, according to Dante.

hard it is to climb a stranger's stair' (58–60). That prospect makes him conclude, 'It's better, then, that I arm myself with foresight, so if that dearest place is snatched away, my verses do not lose me all the rest (heaven)' (109–111). He may not be 'a timid friend to truth' (118) and must 'put clean aside all lies and make plain what in his vision he has seen' (127–128). He must follow Christ, take up his cross, and make known what he has heard, seen, and learned in *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. It is his calling as a poet to put forward his new views frankly.

In Canto 18, Beatrice encourages Dante, and Cacciaguida reminds him of the bravery of the Maccabees and others who abide in the heaven of Mars. Dante assumes responsibility. His conversion to *provedenza* is clearer than ever before.

2 *Fortuna*

In the *Comedy*, the term *fortuna* is used repeatedly. In *Inferno* 2, Beatrice calls Dante 'my friend, who is no friend of Fortune's (61), because he had left the vulgar crowd (105) and followed her as the 'Lady of Grace, through whom alone mankind may go beyond all worldly things' (76–77). After her death, however, "he wandered from the path that leads to truth, pursuing simulacra of the good, which promise more than they can ever give" (Purg., 30,130–132). Remorsefully he admits, "those things with their false joys, offered me by the World, led me astray when I no longer saw your countenance" (Purg., 31,34–36). He allowed himself to be led by excitement and superficiality, instead of those things in life that really deserve our attention.

It is not true that all things in life are determined by God. According to Dante's political work *Monarchia* (11,9), many circumstances are determined by the Old Opponent: Satan. Elsewhere he complains about the simplistic views of those who substitute the adage "history guides our lives" for "fortune-telling, and cast their spells with image-dolls and potions" (Inf., 20,123) or prophesy by means of sparks from smoldering logs (Par., 18,102). We should not try to read divine meanings into all that happens. The fact that Dante places Democritus (4th century BC) "who said the World was chance" (Inf., 4,136) in Limbo among the sages, suggests that he agrees: not everything in life can be interpreted as meaningful. Even though many things that happen to us are forgotten, their fame disappears, "concealed by time" (Par., 16,87), we often behave as if they have eternal value.

Fortuna is also an agonizing mystery for those who are obsessed by wealth and possessions (Inf., 7). Such people are unable to relax because of their

fascination with the way in which *fortuna* "holds all worldly wealth within her fists" (69). The fact that it is outside their control weighs heavily upon them; it blinds them, makes them run into one another, and tightens their hands into fists (56). *Fortuna* beguiles them into "squandering and hoarding (58), which makes it hard to distinguish [their] humanity" (54). Virgil tells Dante, "You see, my son, the short-lived mockery of all the wealth that is in Fortune's keep, over which the human race is bickering; for all the gold that is or ever was beneath the moon won't buy a moment's rest for even one among these weary souls" (61–66). When things go well, they cling to their fortune; when they go wrong, they get distraught. *Fortuna*, thus, takes on quasi-divine airs in the eyes of the greedy; in 70–96 it is compared to the angels who rule the heavens and in 86 with providence (*provede*).

Surrounded by smoke and ignorance, Dante contemplates the suffering in the world and in *Purgatorio* 16 prays, "What is the cause of this? Please make it clear that I may teach the truth to other men; some see it in the stars, some on the earth" (61–63). Marco Lombardo, counselor to Frederik Barbarossa around 1150, responds, "You men on earth attribute everything to the spheres' influence alone, as if with some predestined plan they move all things" (67–69). The influence of the spheres may not be absolutized. Those who allow themselves to be dragged down by the inevitable worries about disease and poverty lose their freedom and become estranged from God. Even though we can rise above coincidence and chance, thanks to "a light that shows you right from wrong" and to free will (75–76), we are often led astray because popes and emperors act as if their happiness and joy depended on power and possessions (97–129). Whoever assumes he can thus conquer chance and fortune is sorely mistaken. As was Lombardo: during his earthly days he did not see things clearly and in purgatory he prays for the peace of the Lamb of God (16–21) and wishes it on Dante (141).

According to *Paradiso* 5,98–99, "the transmutability of our nature" makes us go along with whatever is happening around us and stops us from prudently dealing with the many aspects of life. *Paradiso* 11 (1–3) talks of the "insensate strivings of mortality, useless reasonings" that make people "beat their wings in downward flight". The end of the canto asserts that we are fooled by vain aspirations. The situation is not hopeless, however, provided that we allow ourselves to be led by "the Point at which all times are present times" as Solomon puts it (17,16–18). "If Love in its fervent warmth arrays and prints the clear regard of Primal power, entire perfection will be here acquired" (13,79–81). In the light of God's love for humanity we find peace in the middle of all that upsets us – not by praying for logical insight (13,93–99). Whoever goes along with the way in which God cares for people according to the Bible, finds

new ways of living. The insight that God moves in ways that, at first sight, seem mysterious to our own spontaneous inclinations, only comes about after we have accepted God's extended hand. Since our soul has been created directly by God and partakes in God's freedom, we are not necessarily prisoners of our 'transmutable nature'. Besides, *certe condizioni* lead us in the right direction (32,43), such as: the faith of parents (42), the innocence of children (77), circumcision (80), Christ (83.85.87) and Mary (85–86). Thanks to these, *l'alto proveder divino* (37) unfolds in us and enables us to conform to 'the miraculous disposition of divine Wisdom'.[5] Ultimately, this is how Dante experiences "the wound of *la fortuna*", as he calls his exile in *Convivio* I 3,4. In these miserable circumstances he still manages, with the help and encouragement of many, to find his freedom. And with this, we have arrived at the next topic.

3 *Provedenza*

Depending on the context, *provedenza* alludes to an activity of God and/or man. The relationship between the two is important. The nature, content, and meaning of the notion of faith in God are largely determined by it. At times the emphasis is on the will of God, as in *Inferno* 23,55ff: "High Providence that willed for them to be the ministers in charge of the fifth ditch". In *Paradiso* 11,28ff., Saint Francis and Saint Dominic are the product of "*la provedenza* that governs all the World with wisdom so profound none of His creatures can ever hope to see into Its depths". The (initial) impenetrability of the will of God even makes him sigh: "*Predestinazion*, how deeply hid your roots are from the vision of all those who cannot see the Primal Cause entire" (20,130vv). Here, Aristotle's concept of 'primal cause' should be viewed in light of the liveliness and the love of the Biblical God. This is the God Dante is looking for and in whose direction he is heading. Concerning the meaning and implications of *provedenza*, he feels like "one who is in doubt and longs to have the guidance of a soul who sees the truth and knows of virtue and has love" (17,103–105). In the course of the Comedy, his understanding grows thanks to his conversations with Vergil, Beatrice, Saint Bernard, and – last but not least – Cacciaguida. The latter has been allowed to take a look in "the mighty book whose black and white will never altered be" (5,50–51). In heaven he views "the final Point where time is timeless … Contingency, which in no way extends beyond the pages of your world of matter, is all depicted *nel cospetto eterno*. But this no more confers necessity than does the movement of a boat downstream depend upon the

5 A.M. Chiavacci Leonardi, *La Divina Commedia*: *Paradiso* (Milano: Mondadori, 1994), 885.

eyes that mirror it" (17,17–18.37–42). It is about a never-ending invitation with ever new impulses. *Cospetto eterno* does not mean that God is pulling all the strings like an almighty puppeteer, but it does underline his passionate commitment and commiseration with this earth. God pays close attention to life without controlling it. In the process he does not give up on his intentions, his loving care, and he longs for us to do the same.

Thus, *provedenza* has two sides: God's intentions and how we follow suit. In heaven they merge. Even for the saints, its nature is a mystery, but they are in complete agreement because of the love that is bestowed on them: "I clearly see how in this court a love entirely free gladly obeys Eternal Providence" (21,73–75). That in the Empyreum, the highest heaven or God's own realm (1,121), everything is balanced by *provedenza*, according to the Letter to Cangrande (nr. 61) means that the glory or the light of God fills everything with goodness, wisdom, and power and is accepted by all that is "with its own instinct as its guide" (1,114), i.e. with the possibility to understand and love (118–120). Folco, a troubadour from Marseille who becomes the bishop of Toulouse, puts it as follows: "Here we smile … at the Power that orders and provides. From here we gaze upon that art which works with such effective love; we see the Good by which the world below returns above" (9,103–108).

On earth, however, souls darken (9,72) and people are mostly blind to the love of God as a result of negative experiences and sentiments. Dante does not just state: "put your trust in Providence". To him this would just be a leap in the dark. Rather we must try to discern God's intentions for us, and do all we can to live accordingly, for example, by not seeking our personal or family honor but by serving others. Only at peak moments do we succeed, when the desire to be like God in terms of goodness, wisdom, and righteousness lift us above ourselves. The intensity with which God looks after everything inspires intelligent beings to *amor sanctus sive caritas* (Letter to Cangrande, nr.68), but the desire to be like God gets lost when other desires dominate. "Just as form sometimes may not reflect the artist's true intent, the matter being deaf to the appeal, just so, God's creature, even though impelled toward the true goal, having the power to swerve, may sometimes go astray along his course" (1,127–131). If God had not bestowed "the power of His own providence" (8,98–99) upon us through the heavenly spheres, "chaos would result, not works of art" (8,108).

In order to learn to understand divine providence or, put differently, God's engagement in the life and the future of the world, Dante should follow the Crucified Jesus, even if this entails a good bit of bitterness (17,117). He should remember his baptism and wear the crusaders's mantle like the Lamb of God took the cross upon its shoulders. He should approach life with the Crucified Jesus and Mary in mind. This will not reduce his intellect and his creativity to

purely passive, merely registering instruments. What God's providence asks of him is consistent with Scripture: the letter should be read with a readiness to seek God and a willingness to take responsibility. As Scripture is the product of divine impulse and its human assimilation and articulation in a process of decades or even centuries, so living according to Providence is impossible without human trial and error. This holds true for the Comedy, "this sacred poem to which both Heaven and Earth have set their hand, and made me learn from laboring so long" (25,1–3; cf. 23,61–69), and for Providence as well. God is inviting us to be partners, not purely passive spectators, in his objectives and intentions. We ourselves must exploit our talents and abilities. Only thus can God's Providence accomplish anything.

Dante is not without hope: peace and harmony are possible in this world. Not as a static and unchangeable state, but thanks to a positive focus on God, who asks us to partake in his love for humanity. For this, Dante has to use all his talents and opportunities without denying his vulnerability and mortality; *Paradiso* offers a view of the kind of life that may ensue. Not outside time and world: Dante keeps focusing on the world, discusses the way life evolves here, and wonders how we can break away from the clutches of Mars. To be able to speak of *provedenza*, he must allow himself to be touched by God like the patriarchs and prophets, Jesus and Mary. Faith in *provedenza* means sharing in the way they looked at history and lived their lives. This is a lifelong task that keeps requiring conversion.

4 Ancestry and Vocation

With Aristotle (8,120), Dante maintains that society needs everyone to contribute. For this we should look further than our ancestry (129) since the tendencies of our *natura generata* (the nature of the family) usually does not coincide with *il proveder divino* (133–135). We should look at our lives from the point of view of God's intentions for us and not of a chance belonging (*fortuna*) to a certain family (139). Frequently, however, family, city, and country push us in a direction that is at odds with God's plans. In *Paradiso* 8, Dante's friend Charles Martel from the house of Anjou, who died in 1295 at the age of 24, discusses the relationship between our ancestry and our vocation by means of a concrete situation. His brother Robert (1275–1343) had become king of Naples with the consent of Pope Boniface VIII (8,85) even though he was unsuited and lacked the political art of foresight (*antivedesse* in 76, and *proveder* in 79). He turned into a blind and petty miser unable to find 'deep joy' (85) because he could not see "where all good begins" (87), and never really sought what God intended

for him. With regard to the question "how can sweet seed produce such sour fruit" (93), Charles answers that God's *provedenza* (99) orients all people towards their proper goal (100–102). However, the world is blind to this *proveder divino* (135).

In *Paradiso* 9, Dante uses two figures who really sought God's will to illustrate his point: Cunizza and Rahab. Cunizza and her brother Ezzelino da Romano (Inf 12,10) are "from the same root" (Par., 9,31), but not predestined to the same way of life. She says, "I was overcome by this star's light" (33). The word of God has raised her above her family's influence. Now she encourages others to seek God's intentions and live by them. Rahab, from Jericho, broke with her family's ways (making a profit from prostitution with strangers) and came to their rescue instead. Florence, on the other hand, adores her florins, "breaks the fold, lets the lambs run wild, and turns the shepherds into ravening wolves" (131–132), and moreover: "the Pope and Cardinals heed nothing else; their thoughts do not go out to Nazareth, to the Gospel and the fathers of the Church". They have no interest in the *terra santa* (125–126) and no longer remember St. Peter's martyrdom (133–141). Our descent is not all-determining. Our destiny should be seen in light of God's intentions for us, which generally do not coincide with family interests. In the depth of our souls God calls us to account. "In that One Mind perfect in Itself (God) there is foreseen (*provedute*) not only every type of nature, but the proper destiny for each (*lor salute*, the realization of their personal destiny" (8,101–102).

The importance of Dante's calling is evident in the fact that Cacciaguida speaks in Latin (15,28–30) and refers to the Holy Trinity, the foundation of the Christian way of life (47). That he rejoices in 18,1 about his advice to Dante and refers to it with the Latin *suo verbo* implies, in Kirkpatrick's view, that it is consistent with God's word.[6] Dante needs to let his life be determined by Christ, who gave his blood for others in the name of God. Arming himself with Providence means that, in the depths of this confused and confusing world, he gives his unqualified assent to Christ's way of life. Only then will his life be steered in the right direction. Otherwise it will be bogged down by wishful thinking about the future or fear of death – like the augur, the seer, or the soothsayer who walks around with his head backwards: "because he wished to see too far ahead, he sees now behind and walks a backward track" (Inf., 20,38–39), because he refused to be the image of God who approaches life with compassion and creativity. The biblical perspective can unfold only if Dante allows himself to be led by God and Christ and adopts a critical attitude

6 Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy 3: Paradiso*, translated and edited by Robin Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin, 2007), 406.

towards his own sentiments, desires, ancestry and talents, and courageously gives his all. Where he was still rather passive and overwhelmed by what he sees earlier in *Paradiso*, in the heaven of Mars he is challenged to personally and decisively express God's intentions.

The challenge facing him resembles that of the apostles during the Transfiguration. Dante translates the Gospel text found in Matthew 1,17 (*Surgite, et noli timere*) as *resurgi e vinci* (Par., 14,125), in other words, in the language of the crusaders, "Arise and conquer". He has to take up his cross. His calling as a poet is not merely about literary talent but also about working hard and not dodging criticism and opposition. He needs to transcend his deepest nature (cf. 1,70: *trasumanar* or transhumanize). "To take on the historical (literary) task and follow Christ is to accept not only its transfiguring reward, but also the pre-eminent need for martyrdom and self-sacrifice in human history".[7] He should not allow himself to be guided by Mars, but by Christ, whose cross forms the key to understanding history. Since Vergil and Aeneas were blind to "the genuine perspective of eternity planted into history through the cross",[8] they belonged to "the foolish folk" (17,31*: la gente folle*). This folly will not disappear until we imitate the Lamb of God who took the sins of the world upon himself. Christ's cross in the heaven of Mars is a sign that he has prepared the way towards a real art of living, whereas the way of the old Mars is characterized by violence, intrigue, and deceit. Even when many consider the latter to be real life, only the way of the Lamb offers a hopeful perspective. This is Dante's conviction. He will testify to this when he professes his faith, hope, and love before the apostles of the Transfiguration in the Heaven of the Fixed Stars (Par., 25–27).

5 Social Criticism in the Light of Providence

In Cacciaguida's opinion, the history of Florence has oscillated between Mars and Christ. Between the fifth and seventh centuries, the chapel of Saint John the Baptist arose where the temple of Mars once stood. The mutilated statue of Mars was moved to the vicinity of Ponte Vecchio where the moral deterioration of the medieval town commenced with the murder of Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti (Inf., 28,106–108; Par., 16,140) on the Easter morning of 1216. The Guelfs and the Ghibellines have been battling ever since. The imitation of Christ is no longer the central theme of life: the interests of one's own family

7 Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History*, 13.

8 Schnapp, *The Transfiguration of History*, 29.

are. Kinship becomes more important than solidarity in Christ. Thus the "vain world, the love of which corrupts so many souls" (Par., 15,146–147) comes into being.

Omberto Aldobrandesco testifies to the fact that this love is a fraud that victimizes many: "My ancient lineage, the gallant deeds of my forebears had made me arrogant: forgetful of our common Mother Earth, I held all men in such superb disdain …; the sin of Pride has ruined not only me but all my house, dragging them with it to calamity" (Purg., 11,61–72). Aldobrandesco is in Purgatory, burdened by a load of rocks. It is an illustration of how difficult it is to combine the interest of the family with imitation of Christ: "the procreated being would always walk the procreator's path, if it were not for Holy Providence that overrules" (Par., 8,133ff). In contrast, the essence of the relationship between Cacciaguida and Dante is in their concern for Florence, Italy, and the Holy Land based on the Gospel, at the expense of their own lives, if need be. Dante must renounce injustice as Joshua, Judah Maccabee, and others dwelling in the heaven of Mars have done.

Opposed to the bellicose sentiment of Mars are Nazareth (Annunciation and Mary) and the Crucified Jesus. When Cacciaguida asserts that right from birth, Mary has always given him a 'dwelling-place' (15,133–135), he alludes to her lifelong solicitude for him and for Dante as well. She is the first to notice his predicament (Inf., 1), and through the intercession of St. Bernard, she directs his eyes towards the mystery of God's love of which the Crucified Jesus is the personification par excellence (Par., 33). Dante's criticism of Boniface mainly has to do with the fact that the pope ignores the prophetic-critical voices of the Bible.

After ancient Rome's praises have been sung in the heaven of Mercury (Par., 7) and Roman history has been described as the work of God, then the evil aspects of this city come up. These are mainly concerned with the desire to hold dominion over others. The contributions of Christ and Mary are needed to steer the commendable impulses of ancient Rome in the right direction. This critical and cautious attitude also remains necessary with regard to the history of Christianity. For that reason, Dante distances himself from all kinds of political movements and parties; he becomes a political party in himself in light of the poor and crucified Christ, a prophet who cries out against Church and society. That he may not just passively undergo life and history becomes clear when Cacciaguida sings the praises of Florence in those days when the city was still small and inspired by the best of the Roman soul and the gospel. The way in which Cacciaguida speaks of its degeneration (in line with Ciacco's story in Inf., 6,49–75) connects Dante's sociopolitical philosophy with the spirituality of Nazareth and the crucified Jesus. In the golden era, the various

families constituted a tight community, lived in peace, and formed a pure and temperate town (Par., 15,99; cf. 130–132). But without frugality and chastity, life degenerates. Life should be unpretentious, people should not lose themselves in outward show, luxurious homes, they should dress frugally and not make too much of their ancestry (16,1ff. and 45). Cacciaguida complains of child marriages and the related greed, and about men who conduct their trade far from home. The ideal is a republican, small-scaled, autochthonous town (16,51) in which loyalty, love of family, and home industry rule, where the dead are buried close to their loved ones and a culture of storytelling provides identity, a country with autonomous towns and rural areas run by nobility – under the leadership of an emperor who is not driven by the lust for power and profit and by a pope who protects the spiritual heritage and acts as a critical prophet without striving for political power.

In a similar way, Dante comments on the crusades. He believes the Holy Land is important as the area where the memory of the lives of Jesus and Mary is preserved. That is why it should be open to pilgrims. But how can this goal be achieved? Dante sides with St. Francis who did not attempt to gain entry to the Holy Land by raising an army, but by testifying to the poor Jesus. In his thirst for martyrdom he preached Christ and the apostles in the proud presence of the Sultan of Egypt (11,100–102). Allusions to St. Francis's call to unconditionally follow the Crucified Jesus illustrate Dante's view of the crusades. Its participants should take their orders from Christ and follow in his footsteps. Does this exclude the clash and din of battle? Dante does not state so apodictically, but the suggestion is there.

6 Conclusion

The fact that Dante must arm himself with *provedenza*, reminds us of Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians: 6,11: "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes". A bit further, in verses 14 to 17, the apostle explains this as follows:

> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Dante should not allow himself to be led by *fortuna* with its quirks and whims, but by the way in which God has disclosed himself in Scripture and the saints. Belief in *provedenza* focuses our attention on the way of life that Christ choses for him. Arming himself with *provedenza* means following in his footsteps, even if this leads to conflicts with various people. By frankly expressing his opinion, not glossing over the fact that life is often none too bright, and testifying to his experiences in the hereafter, the *Comedy* assumes the air of a Bible commentary. It can teach the reader about his own path of conversion.

Unlike the celestials, earthly beings do not fully share in the equilibrium of God. Imitating the Crucified Jesus often does not sit well with us, with our spontaneous ideas, feelings, and ambitions. In every stage of life we encounter new obstacles and wonder whether we are still on the right track. With a discerning mind and inspired by the Bible, Dante needs to discover what imitation of the Lamb means for him. Thanks to Christ and Mary, he can approach "the depth of God's *proveder*" (Par., 17,37). With respect to the saints, Bernard of Clairvaux said that "it is fitting that God's lofty light crown them with grace, as much as each one merits, according to the color of their hair" (32,70–72). Through no merit of their own good works (73), but thanks to the perfect baptism in Christ (83) – perfect because his baptism, resulting in his death on the cross, better complies with divine law than circumcision does. This makes Dante realize that access to the Holy Land, to the gospel, and to God must be brought about without military force. As a poet he must use the power of words. He must speak out and be unrelenting in his exposure of evil states of affairs and ideologies.

That signs of God are to be found in the world is obvious for Dante. In the Bible, he reads about places and moments in which life in freedom, equality, and peace light up and stir the desire to realize this, in spite of the vicissitudes of fortune. Without specifying things down to the last detail, God is nearby in the Scriptures and the saints. Without answering all our questions, Christ brings to light what real creativity is like. Dante had better arm himself with the *provedenza* that thus comes to light. This discernment is a decisive moment in the process of his conversion.[9]

9 This article is written in cooperation with Dr. Cia van Woezik, who also translated the original Dutch version.

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CHAPTER 4

Post-Mortem Conversion?

Marcel Sarot

1 Introduction

In a recent book, the British Roman Catholic theologian Gavin D'Costa suggests that the doctrine of the descent into hell has repercussions for the question of whether believers from other religions can attain salvation.[1] In his own words, "the descent explains … how the fruits of the cross are applied to those before Christ and can continue to explain how the fruits of the cross can be applied analogically to those living before Christ, even if they are chronologically living after Christ" (179–180).

The analogy that D'Costa is drawing here is that between Jews who, living and dying before Jesus, had not been reached by His message and thus had not been capable of reacting to it, and followers of other religions who have not been reached by Jesus's message and thus not been capable of reacting to it. In order to enable us to understand the analogy as D'Costa intends it, let me first explain his view of the descent into hell. I shall do so in four propositions:

First of all, between His death and His Resurrection, Christ visited the limbo of the Fathers (166–174); There He preached the Gospel to those who had died before the Incarnation and guided them into heaven (168, 173); Thus, thirdly, Christ liberated the just and proclaimed His power by drawing the Fathers into heaven (166); Finally, "His descent was glorious, and Christ did not suffer the pain proper to any of the abodes of hell" (166).[2]

In the first proposition it is made clear that D'Costa interprets 'hell' in the doctrine of the descent into hell not in its strict sense (the place where the

1 G. D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 161–211. In the following, the numbers between brackets in the main text refer to this book. I would like to thank my colleague Dr. Harm Goris for first drawing my attention to this text. D'Costa was born in Nairobi, Kenya, and is of Catholic Goan (Goans are an ethno-linguistic group in India) descent.

2 This phrase is quoted with approval by D'Costa from A.L. Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 342. D'Costa gives a longer quote from Pitstick, from which I took the idea to structure his view of the descent of Christ into four propositions. I changed the wording of the first three propositions, however, in light of D'Costa's subsequent exposition.

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condemned are eternally punished), nor in the sense of purgatory ("a place of purification, where those who die in a state of grace and without mortal sin, but with venial sin, undergo purification and expiate their sins" [166]), nor the limbo of the unbaptised children. Instead, Christ visited the limbo "where the just who lived before Christ await their redemption. The limbo of the just is thought of as empty after Christ's descent to the just" (166). It is empty, since only the just were there, and these were certain to let themselves be guided into heaven when confronted with Jesus's preaching, as is clear in the second proposition. Thus, though their final state changes (they are leaving the limbo of the Fathers and entering heaven), this is no post-mortem conversion; the orientation towards the good that guided their earthly lives as it were implies their decision to let themselves be guided into heaven once Christ has descended.

Be this as it may, D'Costa builds on his interpretation of the descent to make a point about believers from other religions. If it is part of the meaning of Jesus's descent into hell that Jesus made His redemption available to the Jews, who, because of the time of their birth (and death), might be considered to be beyond its reach, this must have a wider significance. It seems to imply that the limits of God's grace are not determined by the contingencies of His creatures' births. Now D'Costa is a specialist in the theology of religions and interreligious dialogue. One of the questions in that field of expertise that continues to bother people is this: the adherence of people to a specific religion is largely determined by the contingencies of the time and place of their births. Now if that is the case, can it really be true that a just God would favour the believers of one religion above those of another? To phrase this problem more sharply: can it be true that only the believers in one religion, i.e., Christianity, will be awarded salvation? D'Costa argues that if the doctrine of the descent shows that God's salvific will is not limited by the contingencies of the *time* of birth – before or after Christ – it may well be the case that God's salvific will is not limited by the contingencies of the *place* of birth either. The analogy that D'Costa draws, then, is an analogy of being born at the wrong time to being born in at the wrong place. For D'Costa, those being born in at the wrong place are "analogically living before Christ", and the doctrine of the descent suggests, he argues, that their final state will be "resolved post mortem" (161).

He is aware of the fact that we enter a minefield of sensitive issues here and tries to steer clear of these. He explains that the "notion of a second chance, a conversion after death, was to become unacceptable in the Latin Western tradition after Augustine's emphatic denial of such a possibility, and it disappears from the commentary tradition after the fourth century" (169). For Augustine, "someone who is destined for damnation at death cannot be saved by an event

that takes place after death" (172). The tradition met this concern by claiming that Christ did not visit hell, but the limbo of the just (the *limbo patrorum*). In that case, "no conversion is required but a completion of the person's life and their destiny" (173). Furthermore, "it would be right to say that the person is destined for salvation, and the descent employs Christological resources to throw light upon how that might be envisaged" (172). There would be 'adequate continuity' (173) between the just life of the person and the post-mortem choice for Christ. D'Costa squarely sides with the tradition here, and accepts Alyssa Lyra Pitstick's claim that "Christ descended … only to the limbo of the Fathers" (166). He explores new ground, however, when he claims that the situation of just people from other religions who were born after Christ is analogous to the situation of the Old Testament Fathers. In both cases, he sees in their justice and their focus on the good an ontological orientation towards Christ that only waits for its epistemic complement to become fully fledged faith. As the doctrine of the descent shows, Christ's proclamation might enable the just to make explicit their ontological orientation epistemically even after-death (164). In this way, "the limbo of the just conceptually explains the entry of non-Christians into a relationship with Christ and his church" (177) and their salvation is indeed resolved post-mortem.

Altogether, D'Costa puts forward a new and creative proposal that nevertheless builds squarely on the Catholic tradition. It will form the starting point of my reflections here that will focus on two issues. My first question will be to what extent D'Costa succeeds in avoiding the assertion of the possibility of post-mortem conversions. He obviously tries to avoid this assertion, but it is not clear that he can succeed in doing so while simultaneously claiming that believers in Judaism and other religions can, after their death, be drawn towards Christ and saved by him. Is this not tantamount to claiming the possibility of post-mortem conversion to Christianity? After having discussed this question, I will discuss the question of whether, once one starts to reckon with a class of people living analogously before Christ, this class should not be widened beyond the group of believers from other religions.

2 Post-mortem Conversion?

Post-mortem conversion has not always been a problem for Christians. The author of 1 Peter wrote the following extraordinary text:

> (18) Christ himself died once and for all for sins, the upright for the sake of the guilty, to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life,
> (19) and, in the spirit, he went to preach to the spirits in prison.
> (20) They refused to believe long ago, while God patiently waited to receive them, in Noah's time when the ark was being built. In it only a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water (1 Peter 3:18–20).

The principal Church Fathers of the first three centuries were inclined to read this text as referring to the descent of Christ. According to them, in the descent Christ preached to the dead with a view to converting them.[3] For Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-ca. 215), the question was not whether such post-mortem preaching and conversion was possible, but whether it also applied to gentiles. His answer was: Yes, at least in this sense that if Christ Himself did not preach to them, His apostles would.[4] Apparently, for him, the gentiles were in this respect on a par with the Jews: If they turned to Christ, this counted as a conversion. Now that we have seen that Clement argued that the descent of Christ aimed at the conversion of both Jews and gentiles, it does not come as a surprise that Origen (184/5–253/4), well known for his universalist inclinations, saw in the descent into hell one of the means that Christ uses to obtain this universal salvation.[5]

The first to effectively oppose this idea of post-mortem conversion was Augustine. As D'Costa has it, "Clement's notion of a second chance, a conversion after death, was to become unacceptable in the Latin Western tradition after Augustine's emphatic denial of such a possibility, and it disappears from the commentary tradition after the fourth century" (169).[6] According to Augustine, Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison took place at the time of Noah, *before the incarnation*, 'in the Spirit' (1 Peter 3:19).[7] In the time of Noah, Christ went to preach to those who refused to believe. As we have seen, D'Costa accepts Augustine's denial. He does not explain, however, let alone evaluate, Augustine's arguments. Since Augustine has in this respect been so influential, and since his rejection lies at the root of the idea that the 'hell' to which Christ

3 P. Callon, "Descente du Christ aux Enfers", G. Jacquemet (ed.), *Catholicisme hier aujourd'hui demain* VOL. III (Paris: Letouzay et Ané, 1952), 658–661, esp. 659.

4 Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI 6. On the post-mortem preaching of the apostles, see also *The Shepherd of Hermas* Parables 93 [=IX 16], 5–7.

5 *Contra Celsum* II 43.

6 Thus also Callon, "Descente", 660.

7 Augustine, *Letter* 164, V 16.

descended can only have been the limbo of the Fathers, it seems useful to have a look at Augustine's objections against post-mortem conversion.

Once we try to retrieve Augustine's arguments, however, we soon understand why D'Costa is so silent on his arguments. The texts that we find references to in the literature[8] are conspicuous for their lack of arguments. In his *City of God* (XXI.17)[9] Augustine argues against "those who fancy that no man shall be punished eternally". This amounts to *the certainty of post-mortem conversion* for those who did not complete their earthly lives as convinced Christians, a rather stronger position than the mere *possibility* of post-mortem conversion. Some arguments against the certainty of post-mortem conversion, however, would also be effective against the mere possibility. That would be the case, for example, when Augustine argued for its *im*possibility. I am afraid that this is not what he does. Augustine's argument is a not too strong version of the slippery slope argument: If God in His mercy would save all humanity, why wouldn't God save all angels and even the devil? But it does not follow, of course, that if God saves one type of creature, God would need to save all creatures. And in *Letter 164*, which is entirely devoted to Christ's descent into hell and the interpretation of 1 Peter 3, he speaks about "the difficulties which prevent me from pronouncing any definite opinion on the subject" (IV 10),[10] i.e. who were the spirits in prison to whom Christ went to preach? While he is obviously uneasy with the idea of post-mortem conversion, he certainly does not there definitively exclude preaching to the dead or conversion in reaction to that. While I cannot be certain that Augustine does not provide more conclusive arguments elsewhere that I have not yet found, it may be the case that he discouraged those who came after him in the Christian tradition from accepting post-mortem conversions *without good arguments*.

When we look at the Catholic tradition after Augustine, we find that it is perhaps slightly more ambiguous than D'Costa suggests. On the one hand, life before death is taken to have definitive significance, and it is asserted that "each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven – through a purification or immediately – or immediate and everlasting damnation" (CCC 1021; cf. D'Costa 162). A fundamental rejection of God cannot be undone after death (CCC 1035; cf. Lk. 16:19–31). On the other hand, praying for the dead is taken to be

8 Neither D'Costa nor Callon give specific references to Augustine in this connection.

9 This text is mentioned in this connection by J. Goetz, *Conditional Futurism: New Perspective of End-Time Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 135.

10 <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1102164.htm> (Accessed 14 December 2014).

meaningful and, at least in some cases, it is assumed to make a difference. The same applies to purgatory, which is often seen in terms of purification (CCC 1031): that also may make a difference. Now it seems strange and unsatisfactory to assume that these make a difference to *God's* attitude only, so that God admits people to heaven who would not otherwise have arrived there, without some measure of change *in the humans* involved. Is it not implied in the very concept of purification that the people purified grow purer, in other words that they grow in their openness to God even after death? Now if that happened, would not that amount to a second chance, to some form of conversion?

If we want to know whether the descent into hell – either in its original form (Christ visiting the Fathers) or in its analogous form (Christ inviting believers from other traditions post-mortem) – involves some form of conversion, we should first clarify the term 'conversion'. Lewis Rambo, one of the world's foremost experts on conversion, notes that the basic meaning of the biblical terms for conversion (*shub*, *strephein*, *epistrephein* and *metanoia*) is *to turn*, and that one should always ask: *from what to what?* In the Old Testament, people convert from idols to the true God, or from some form of infidelity to the covenant. In the New Testament, people turn from all sorts of conditions to Christ. More generally, Rambo distinguishes between four types of conversion: 1.Tradition transition: From one religious tradition to another; 2. Institutional transition: From one subgroup within a major tradition to another; 3. Affiliation: From outside a religious group to inside it; 4. Intensification: From being a lukewarm believer to being an enthusiastic believer.

In many cases, an encounter with a person or group plays a pivotal role.[11] To conclude our definitions, we should also define *definitive significance.* I propose that we say that life on earth has definitive significance if and only if our specific condition after death would not be possible without the particular life we led before death. On this definition, life before death does not have definitive significance if there is no life after death or if the real decisions are made only after death, and life before death has a function analogous to training for a match.

Once these definitions are in place, we can try to decide whether Christ's descent to hell involved post-mortem conversions. In the case of the turning to Christ of the Fathers of the old covenant, the answer depends on the question whether one sees the old covenant and the new one as one tradition, as two independent traditions, or as two subgroups within one tradition. Each of these positions can be and has been defended. Personally, I am inclined to see

11 L. Rambo, "Conversion", Rodney Hunter (ed.), *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 228–230, esp. 228–229.

Judaism and Christianity as we today encounter them as two separate but parallel developments on the basis of one root tradition.[12] In Jesus's time, however, the parting of the ways had not yet taken place, so that one might argue that if Jesus preached to them and thus drew them into heaven this neither involved a transition from one tradition to another, nor from one subgroup within a tradition to another subgroup. Nor do the other forms of conversion apply. Thus, the redemption of the Fathers does not involve a conversion.

In the case of those living analogically before Christ, the situation is different, however. They do change from one religious tradition to another. And even if they *implicitly* knew Christ through an unconscious desire, or if – as Rahner claimed – "the inner *telos* of every genuinely good and charitable act is oriented toward and presupposes God",[13] it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that believers from other religious traditions, who, after their deaths accept Christ, undergo some form of conversion. They turn from their own religious worldview to another, in which Christ holds centre stage. Though I am aware of the fact that further argument is possible, I am inclined to grant that we should speak of 'conversions' here. However, I am also inclined to believe that this need not be fatal for D'Costa's position, since as we have seen above, while the Catholic tradition has not been very outspoken about post-mortem conversion, it has been so on the question of the definitive significance of our earthly lives. This may not be given up, and much of the uneasiness with post-mortem conversion may well be caused by the intuition that accepting some form of post-mortem conversion implies giving up the definitive significance of our earthly life. This, however, may not be the case here. D'Costa, for one, seems to suggest that this definitive significance is not undermined here. What happens is not a break with life before death but "a completion of the person's life and their destiny. There must be adequate continuity in the person's life for them to 'qualify' for being present in the limbo of the just" (173). Aristotle and C.S. Lewis might help to explain how this might be the case. Aristotle claims that our acts help to form our characters: "We learn a craft by producing the same product that we must produce when we have learned it – becoming builders by building, and harpists by playing the harp. So also, then, we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions,

12 See my *Religie in de spiegel van het kwaad* (Almere: Parthenon, 2012), 20–21.

13 D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 163, summarising a point made by Karl Rahner, "Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbour and the Love of God", Rahner, *Theological Investigations* vol. 6 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), 231–53.

brave by doing brave actions".[14] Following Aristotle's trail, in his *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis discusses the importance of making the correct choices:

> Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-creatures, and with itself.[15]

By our acts we form our characters, and once we have moulded our character in a specific form, acts that are incompatible with it become very hard for us, if not impossible, whereas acts that fit into this character come naturally to us. In this sense, the character that we achieve by the way we act has something definitive about it. If we apply this to those living analogically before Christ, we may understand how, on the one hand, the state in which they died has decisive significance, while, on the other hand, the preaching of Christ could still make a difference to them. Seen from a Christian perspective, believers from other religious traditions erred in a very public way. But it is not always those who openly err that are the most evil people. Immediately after the above quotation, Lewis discusses a similar point when he enters into an issue that always used to puzzle him in Christian authors:

> They talk about mere sins of thought as if they were immensely important: and then they talk about the most frightful murders and treacheries as if you had only got to repent and all would be forgiven. But I have come to see that they are right. What they are always thinking of is the mark which the action leaves on that tiny central self which no one sees in this life but which each of us will have to endure – or enjoy – for ever. One man may be so placed that his anger sheds the blood of thousands, and another so placed that however angry he gets he will only be laughed at. But the little mark on the soul may be much the same in both. Each has done something to himself which, unless he repents, will make it harder for him to keep out of the rage next time he is tempted, and will make the rage worse when he does fall into it. Each of them, if he seriously turns to

14 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103a-b (tr. Terence Irwin).

15 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Collins Fontana, 1958[5]), 82–83.

> God, can have that twist in the central man straightened out again: each is, in the long run, doomed if he will not.

Applied to believers from other religious traditions, the mark on the soul that their faith has left need not have made them into malevolent people. In most cases, that is even unlikely, because the precepts and teachings of other religions "often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men" (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). If other religions indeed reflect rays of the Truth given to humanity in Christ, it may be argued that they can function as *praeparationes evangelicae* that prepared their believers for the message of Christ. As a result, they will be open to it when it reaches them after their deaths, so that it can make a real difference to them.

I conclude that what Aristotle and C.S. Lewis have to say about character formation may help us to understand how we can assert that those who lived analogically before Christ, when visited by Christ after their deaths, like once the Patriarchs during the descent, may convert to Christ and be saved by Him. They do so not in spite of their earthly life, but as a result of it. Their religious traditions have, by the rays of Truth they contain, prepared them for the encounter with Christ. Thus, their earthly lives do have definitive significance – but in another, more positive way than Christians used to think in the past.

3 People Living Analogously Before Christ

In an obvious and laudable attempt to remain within the bounds of the Catholic tradition – an attempt that in my view is successful – D'Costa is relatively restrictive with respect to the class of people who receive a post-mortem visit by Christ. As I pointed out above, according to D'Costa, only the just Jews who were born before Christ received a visit during the descent, and when he delineates the class of people living analogously before Christ, he restricts it to people from other religions who have lived good lives (162). In both cases, however, there are reasons to throw the net somewhat wider. In the case of the descent into hell, much depends on the question which biblical texts one interprets as dealing with it. With the early Church Fathers, I take 1 Peter 3:19–20 to be about the descent: "In the spirit, he went to preach to the spirits in prison. They refused to believe long ago, while God patiently waited to receive them, in Noah's time when the ark was being built". If this text is about the descent, however, it certainly does not state that Christ went to the place where only those within the old covenant who were righteous without further qualification were waiting for their redemption. Here again, Jesus came for the

sinners rather than for the just.[16] This does not imply, of course, that all those whom Jesus visited were taken by Him into heaven. As we have seen, the reaction of those visited by Jesus must have depended on the ways in which they had moulded their characters during their earthly lives; only the just were prepared to accept Jesus as their Saviour.

Also in the case of the class of people living analogously before Christ, I see reason to throw the net somewhat wider. My arguments in this case are independent of my arguments in the previous paragraph. The analogy between the just Patriarchs and the believers from other religions who lived a good life is based on the fact that in both cases Christ was not available to people who had lived good lives. I would like to suggest here, that once one starts to draw this analogy, one must broaden it further. The class of people who live good lives but to whom Christ is not available is broader than that of those who have been brought up within other religions and who have never even heard the name of Christ or seen the sign of the Cross. It is broader in at least the following two respects. Those who have been raised within another religion and who have heard of Christ but to whom the choice for Christ and His Church has never been presented as a live option, one might argue, are also included here.[17] The same may even apply to some who live in the Western world but who are brought up and continue to live in circles in which Christianity is so misrepresented that it seems an option from a past era only, and no longer a live option that sensible people of our time may choose. While I do not think that it is possible to give clear criteria that help to distinguish unwaveringly between those to whom Christianity has been presented as a live option and those to whom it has not – in the end, I think, it is up to God and not to us to decide who has had a fair chance to choose for Christ and who has not – I consider it important to state explicitly that even in the Western world, Christianity no longer is a live option for all of us. Looking around me in the Netherlands, I am afraid that this applies to a larger percentage of young people than previous generations would have considered possible. Finally, I would like to suggest that the analogy may even apply to some who have been baptised and brought up as Christians. I am thinking here of those cases in which representatives of the

16 I have argued this point in more detail in my "The Scope of Redemption". For an excellent summary of the discussion of various interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18–22, see C.E. Laufer, *Hell's Destruction: An Exploration of Christ's Descent to the Dead* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 11–15.

17 I should state here that it is not entirely clear to me whether D'Costa would disagree with me here. The way in which he discusses the analogy with the descent seems to suggest that he does, but I do not think that he explicitly says so.

Church by sexual or other misbehaviour made Christianity psychologically unavailable to their victims, because these associated Christianity with misbehaviour rather than with Christ. Here again, it is not up to us to judge; God will know. To all of these cases, I think, article 16 of the conciliar decree *Lumen gentium* applies: "nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel".

In all of these cases, however, even if an explicit choice for Christ before death does not seem strictly necessary for salvation, one's earthly life continues to have definitive significance. What we have said above about the logic of character formation explains, I think, that each life is a preparation either for acceptance or for rejection of Christ. The character of those to whom Christianity has been so misrepresented that it is not culturally available to them may nevertheless be genuinely good and thus *implicitly* directed towards God, a direction that can only become explicit in an encounter with Christ. And also those who have been raised as Christians but put off by unchristian behaviour, may again be genuinely directed towards the good even while explicitly rejecting Christianity. They may need a direct confrontation with Christ to become aware that while seemingly rejecting Christ, they had not been rejecting Christ Himself but misrepresentations of Christ by unworthy Christians. In all of these cases the earthly lives of those involved have decisive significance: if they had not been directed towards the good, they would not have engendered post-mortem openness towards Christ. Moreover, in all of these cases the redemption is only achieved through Christ, even if the confrontation with Christ takes place only post-mortem.

4 Conclusions

Gavin D'Costa argues that if Christ did not reject the just Patriarchs because they were born at the wrong time, he will not reject believers from other religions because they were born at the wrong place. Thus, their salvation will be resolved post-mortem. While supporting this position, I have argued that D'Costa fails in his attempt to avoid the implication of a post-mortem conversion. If believers from other religions who lived good lives will in a post-mortem encounter with Christ recognise Him as their Saviour, this would in fact amount to some form of post-mortem conversion. I have also argued, however, that this may be less problematic than D'Costa assumes, since the Catholic

tradition asserts the definitive significance of each earthly life rather than the impossibility of post-mortem conversions. On the basis of what Aristotle and C.S. Lewis have said about the consequences of individual acts for character formation, I have argued that it is possible to show that the post-mortem acceptance of Christ, of which D'Costa assumes that it is possible for believers from other religions who lived good lives, is a consequence of these lives rather than a turning away from them. Thus, their earthly lives retain definitive significance. Finally, I have suggested that once one begins to identify a group of people who live analogically before Christ, this group cannot be restricted to believers from other religions who lived a good life. The group of "those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life" (LG 16) is larger and may include believers from other religions and even, in extreme cases, people who have been raised as Christians.[18]

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18 Much of this article has been speculative and goes beyond generally accepted Christian beliefs. I offer these speculations, therefore, in a spirit of humility, as an attempt to articulate a position worth considering because it holds together (1) the necessity of Christ for salvation (2) the definitive significance of each human life and (3) the possibility that 'those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life' (LG 16) nevertheless attain salvation.

CHAPTER 5

Seeing Christ on the Battlefield: Sign-Making, Sacrament and Conversion

Stephan van Erp

> … the war itself was a parenthesis — our curious type of existence here is altogether in parenthesis.
>
> DAVID JONES, *In Parenthesis*[1]

1 Introduction

The twentieth century has seen a rich tradition of writers and artists who converted to Catholicism. Some of them are now part of the canon of modern world literature, like G.K. Chesterton, Julien Green, Graham Greene, Ernst Jünger, Muriel Spark and Evelyn Waugh. Some of these authors wrote explicitly about their conversion and their Catholic beliefs, and they considered their authorship to be an important expression of their faith. This small wave of converted Catholic artists is all the more remarkable because they lived in an age in which Catholicism seemed destined to become a mere footnote to the history of twentieth-century art. That in itself was a rather remarkable development, considering the dominant role the Catholic Church had played in the history of western art for centuries. Despite this cultural shift, which increasingly seemed to position the Catholic Church and the art world against each other, a Catholic elite came about that chose to testify to its beliefs and emphatically express them, for everyone to see.[2]

Nowadays, the intimate connection between art and Catholicism would be considered by many as something from the past. Secularization and the concomitant suspicion towards religious traditions have obviously contributed to the marginalization of Catholic culture. Apart from sociological views on the

1 D. Jones, *In Parenthesis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), xv.

2 Cf. S. Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism and Postwar Paris – 1919–1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

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changing role of religions in the modern era, art history itself also offers explanations for this development. In the nineteenth century, many artists had already freed themselves from various religious attachments and engagements. With the famous dictum *l'Art pour l'Art*, the arts declared their autonomy. Any form of partisanship was dismissed as an unwanted addition or a distraction from what art should really be about: not about content, but about the form of the work of art itself, or at most the exposure of reality in as far as it was a distortion of the pure form that could only be realized in a work of art. This had quite dramatic effects on the relation between art and the Church, which had been rather close up to that point. Instead of as works of art, the Church and its liturgy were increasingly regarded as romantic forms from a nostalgic past, not least while the Church had cultivated them as such, be it for emancipatory reasons. There are many examples of sentimental neo-styles that tried to copy the old glory of Catholicism, like the Gothic Revival or Victorian Romanticism. In retrospect, rather than restoring the relation between the Catholic Church and the arts, these schools have widened the chasm.

The Catholic Church has had a hard time keeping up with the visual idiom of modern art, even when some artists expressly started to re-engage with politics and religion. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church had become quite a strong influence in Europe and in several countries. It now formed its own sociopolitical group with its own culture. Occasionally, this led to a certain complacency that could easily be afforded. If ever a need for renewal was expressed, these were certainly no prominent voices. Architecture was the one remarkable exception to this trend. Throughout the twentieth century there are important examples of modern Church architecture, which have gained their rightful place in the modern history of art. Incidentally, the designs were mostly by non-Catholic architects like Le Corbusier or more recently Renzo Piano. There are very few comparable examples in painting and sculpture. As mentioned before, literature did however see a whole generation of famous Catholic writers, often converts. They were not so much appreciated for their Catholicism, however – with the notable exception of G.K. Chesterton – and their works were usually not considered to be 'Catholic art'. Regardless, there were quite a few authors who expressly paraded their Catholic faith.[3]

The question that now presents itself is what motivated those converts. What made them decide to engage with Catholicism? The answer to that question is different in each individual case, and it is usually of a political, biographical or psychological nature. But were there any theological reasons? The story of Catholicism in the rapidly changing culture of the twentieth century

3 D. Gioia, "The Catholic Writer Today", *First Things*, December 2013.

will be more exhaustive if closer attention is paid to the way in which these converts experienced and expressed their relationship with God. The modern historiography of Catholicism has hardly paid any attention to it, as it is generally believed that the experience of God can only be expressed in complex metaphysical or dogmatic terms that almost nobody understands anymore. The implication is that the historian should study the practical or material aspects of faith in order to show that this faith has not been imposed by some authority and is in fact something entirely different from what theology wants us to believe. Although this might have been the case in some instances, the opposite has also been true. In the following, I hope to show that some conversions in the twentieth century illustrate that doctrine and lived faith go hand in hand.[4]

2 David Jones: Soldier and Painter

The developments in Catholicism in the past century can be characterized by a growing awareness of the coherence of faith, on the one hand, and history and the context in which that faith is lived and testified to on the other. In this chapter I will illustrate this by presenting a portrait of David Jones, a British soldier in the First World War who painted and wrote poetry about his experiences during that war. He is virtually unknown outside of Britain where he is considered to be one of the main modernist writers, alongside T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. Shortly after the Great War, he converted to Catholicism. He did not convert because the faith would help him cope with the horrors of the war. Rather, he engaged with the Catholic tradition through his encounters with friends. Only after his conversion, the Catholic vision offered him a different perspective on the brutal reality of war. This newly obtained vision did not contradict the horror, but instead showed him the inescapable meaning of it, and challenged him to respond with a creative answer.

Early Life

Walter David Jones was born on 1 November 1895 in Brockley, Kent, which is today one of the suburbs of south London.[5] His father belonged to the lower middle class, originally came from North Wales and worked as a foreman at the printers' office of a Christian publisher. His mother was a teacher from London.

4 Cf. S. van Erp, *De onvoltooide eeuw: Voorlopers van een katholieke cultuur* (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2015).

5 J. Miles, D. Shiel, *David Jones: The Maker Unmade* (Bridgend: Seren, 2003).

David's parents attended an Anglican Church. His mother preferred the rather intellectually oriented High Church, which had a lavishly decorated liturgy not unlike that of Roman Catholic churches. Nevertheless, the family attended an evangelical community, because David's father was a lay preacher there. David had an elder brother and sister. His brother Harold died of tuberculosis when he was twenty-one, just as David, who was fourteen at the time, was about to attend the arts academy in Camberwell. His parents would remain in Brockley for the rest of their lives and David, who would never marry, regularly returned to his parental home. After his death on 28 October 1974, he was buried with his parents in the Brockley and Ladywell Cemetery, where the tomb he designed himself, can still be visited.[6]

David grew up in a family that attached great importance to the written word. His father worked for the *Christian Herald Company* and often brought home books and magazines. The Church they attended had a liturgy that reserved a prominent role for preaching and exegesis. Like his mother however, young David was sensitive to religious imagery. When at an early age he asked what guardian angels were, his father answered that there was no proof of the existence of such angels in the Bible. That did not stop David from exploring his fascination with what he would later call the 'Catholic imagination'.

As a boy, he developed a lasting love for the stories about King Arthur, the legendary and noble knight who defended Britain against the Saxons in the fifth and sixth centuries. His father preferred the Arthurian stories from the *Mabinogion*, a Welsh manuscript of the fourteenth century that contains older stories about King Arthur than the more famous collection by Sir Thomas Mallory, compiled a century later. Apart from the stories about Arthur, the *Mabinogion* also contained myths and legends from the pre-Christian Welsh culture. The Gaelic and Welsh culture his father introduced him to at an early age by teaching him the language and buying books about Welsh history for him, caused Jones to feel ambivalent about his roots, which were, after all, both English and Welsh. Later in his life, he would spend longer periods in Wales and get to know his Welsh heritage much more closely.

Besides his love of reading and his religious and mythological imagination, David turned out to be an exceptional draughtsman at a very young age. His parents encouraged this. His father had him copy cartoons from the newspapers and they entered his drawings for competitions and exhibitions, where they would occasionally find a real audience. Nevertheless, his parents were

6 Director Derek Shiel and producer Adam Alive have filmed three biographical portraits of David Jones: 1. *In Search of David Jones: Artist, Soldier, Poet* (2008); 2. *David Jones Between the Wars: The Years of Achievement* (2012); and 3. *David Jones: Innovation and Consolidation* (2014).

not immediately convinced that he should go to an art school when David expressed this wish. He insisted, however, and at the age of fourteen he went to the nearby *Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts*.

Sketches of the War

At eleven p.m. on the fourth of August 1914, Great Britain declared war upon Germany. Jones tried to enlist as a soldier, but was sent away due to his short stature and his slim chest size. The war would escalate rapidly during the first few months, however. The number of casualties grew fast, and the British government had to recruit more and more young men. On 19 December 1915, Jones found himself in the trenches of Neuve Chapelle, where the previous year had seen a massive battle that had not succeeded in shifting the front-line.[7] Jones was a reasonably apt soldier, but he showed no ambition. He would be awarded some decorations later on, but on the whole he was often spared by the others on account of his weak physique. During an interview later in life, his sister told the reporter that other soldiers used to carry his rifle, because it was too heavy for him. Given the opportunity, Jones would rather work on his drawings. His first sketches from Belgium and Northern France show 'everyday life' in the trenches. In Normandy, he would draw the villages his regiment passed through. Again, he seems to have a keen eye for the atmosphere and displayed a concrete sensibility that he would later show in his poetic *magnum opus* on the war, *In Parenthesis*, where he describes the effects of a heavy explosion during that same period:

> He stood alone on the stones, his mess-tin spilled at his feet. Out of the vortex, rifling the air it came – bright, brass-shod, Pandoran; with hall-filling screaming the howling crescendo's up-piling snapt. The universal world, breath held, one half second, a bludgeoned stillness. Then the pent violence released a consummation of all burstings out; all sudden up-rendings and rivings-through – all taking-out of vents – all barrier-breaking – all unmaking. Pernitric begetting – the dissolving and splitting of solid things.[8]

Jones's regiment moved south from Neuve Chapelle to take part in the battle of the Somme. During that battle, his division was ordered to perform a frontal attack on the German troops entrenched in the woods. The Germans had laid booby traps and Jones got injured in his left leg. He managed to crawl back to

7 Th. Dilworth, *David Jones in the Great War* (London: Enitharmon Press, 2012).

8 Jones, *In Parenthesis*, 24.

the field hospital and was shipped back to England shortly after. After several months of convalescence, he returned to France.

Jones, by now considerably weakened, concentrated mainly on drawing his fellow soldiers while they were preparing for battle, cleaning their kit, or dozing off from hunger and exhaustion. His drawing was sketchy and impressionist, which seems to make sense, considering how little time there was to draw the soldiers. Apart from that, Jones would draw anything he saw around him: from landscapes and village streets to the equipment that was used and the rats they shot in the trenches. His drawings are remarkable for their calm, their balance, their accuracy, and their depiction of the banal. They are best compared to the works of an early Vincent van Gogh or Piet Mondriaan. He does, however, differ from these forerunners in one respect. The landscape the young David Jones learned to draw was that of the war, and remarkably, he would show its triviality and humanity, rather than its horrors.

Eucharist at the Front

In April 1915, his battalion was issued with steel helmets, which reminded David of the kettle hat, the headgear of the medieval foot soldiers in the King Arthur stories he loved so much. During the war, propaganda posters would often depict soldiers as knights. The soldiers themselves were told that in their sacrifice, they were closely connected to their predecessors in great historical battles, like those of Blenheim, Badajoz, Waterloo, Sebastopol and Ladysmith. That bloody past was often, and to some effect, romanticized and heroically depicted. Jones would later write that in the trenches he experienced a strange metamorphosis of feeling that made him conscious of the reality, the gravity, and the urgency of the situation in which they found themselves. He would feel connected to the whole of history. In his poetry on the war, he would regularly refer to historical and legendary battles, not because he wanted to remind the reader of those heroic theatres of war, but because he saw the men around him behave like those past heroes.

On a rainy Sunday morning during his posting in France – in 1917 – David was looking for firewood in the woods. Near a barn he saw some old wooden wheels, and he expected to find more and drier wood inside that barn. When he looked into the barn through a crack between the boards, he saw the restless flames of two candles. After his eyes had become used to the darkness, he could see a man in an alb standing behind an ammunition crate, over which a white cloth had been draped. On it were the two candles that shone their warm glow onto the golden-coloured chasuble. The muddied khaki of the uniforms of a couple of soldiers was also lit by the flames of the candles. He recognized two of the infantry soldiers: an Italian from London who had a heavy cockney

accent, and a truculent Irishman who was usually drunk. He was struck by the sight of these two men kneeling. A little bell rang out and for a moment and David was engrossed by this scene, until he realized that this was a Catholic mass being celebrated. Because he was not familiar with the ritual, Jones felt like an intruder who had stumbled upon a mysterious cult. He did not stay to watch, but turned to go.[9]

This brief moment in the woods made quite an impression on him. The surroundings and the barn reminded him of the birth of Christ, and the dedication of the soldiers and the intimate atmosphere prompted him to think of the Last Supper. He would later claim that never during an Anglican Eucharist had he experienced the unity he had felt between those men in that barn during the Great War, so close to the front line. Later, he would describe the Eucharist as a form in which the unity of the whole can be experienced, exactly what the artist, he believed, is always looking for.

In February 1918 he was struck down by trench fever and again transported to England. On 11 September 1918, after more than four years, the war ended. But Jones's war was not over yet. He had meanwhile been shipped to Limerick in Ireland to recover, and he would not return home until February 1919. Although by then he had been back from France for about a year, he was still tired from the war. The loud explosions seemed to have shaken him to the core. Apart from the penetratingly loud bangs that seemed to have lodged themselves in his body, he never discussed his experiences with anyone. He would only do so much later. In a letter home, he does mention, however, that he can no longer enjoy poetry. Jones had continued to read poetry during the war, despite the mockery of his fellow soldiers, who considered reading poetry to be a very effeminate thing. During his time in the trenches he would read on imperturbably, but at the end of the war, he could no longer muster the concentration needed for attentive reading, and as a consequence, he could no longer enjoy poetry.

For Christmas 1919, he designed a nostalgic Christmas card showing a soldier returning home to his wife. This drawing is very much out of tune with the rest of his work. This image is a cliché and lacks any connection to the daily life that had been so typical of his drawings from the war years. The soldier in the Christmas card looks like one of the crusaders on the wartime propaganda posters. The vitality of Jones's earlier work has vanished and he seems to suffer from depression. Here, one can see how he now draws soldiers as if they are ghosts in a dream-world that bears no resemblance to the everyday life that

9 Dilworth, *David Jones in the Great War*, 151–152.

had been manifest in his drawings from the trenches. Calm and accuracy have given way to drama, fear and confusion.

3 A Conversion to Style? Becoming a Catholic Artist

After the war, Jones enrolled at a new arts academy, the *Westminster School of Art*, which at that time was much better than the one in Camberwell. Westminster is in the borough of Victoria, which is also home to the Roman Catholic cathedral of London where Jones used to spend his lunchtime. This cathedral had just been fitted with Eric Gill's Stations of the Cross, to which Jones was very much drawn. Gill (1882–1940), now a controversial artist because of his morally reprehensible life-style, was by then a famous graphic artist and sculptor who had converted to Catholicism in 1913.[10]

Arts and Crafts: Encountering Eric Gill

Initially, Gill trained in architecture and typography, but he would become famous for his sculpture and reliefs that were characterized by sharp yet flowing lines that showed some affinity with *art deco*. Gill also wrote pamphlets and lectured on art and labour. After a socialist and politically active period, he became a lay Dominican with the support and the guidance of Vincent McNabb, a famous Dominican theologian of that period. The socially engaged McNabb was known for his addresses at *Speakers' Corner* in Hyde Park every Sunday morning. Every week he would preach about the tenets of Catholic social doctrine as they had been laid down by Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), a document McNabb liked to quote:

> (…) some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class: For the ancient workingmen's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place. Public institutions and the laws set aside the ancient religion. Hence, by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the Church, is nevertheless, under a different guise, but with like injustice, still practiced by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added that the hiring of labour and the

10 F. MacCarthy, *Eric Gill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989).

> conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.[11]

Inspired by this highly critical, Catholic vision of society, labour and money, Gill decided to withdraw from society with a group of fellow artists to live in a community that had some contemplative and religious characteristics and lived off the land. Unlike an actual religious community, however, this group was meant for lay people who did not commit to the community by means of religious vows. For Gill, it was not so much the new Catholic engagement with the proletariat that appealed to him, although as a socialist he obviously shared that engagement. He was mainly interested in the religious vision of labour and craft. It had many aspects in common with that of the *Arts and Crafts Movement*, to which Gill belonged. This was a protest movement that started in the nineteenth century, which objected to the degrading consequences of industrialization. Gill believed Leo XIII had added an important religious dimension to the Catholic faith, particularly with the idea that whatever is made with human hands may never lead to usury or slavery, and that the production process, including the worker and the product, should be seen in the light of its sacred origins, the Creator of the world, who will sanctify it all.[12] In Gill, Jones recognized his own dedication to art, and Gill's vision of labour, strongly founded on his Catholic beliefs, also appealed to him.

During his time at the Westminster art academy, Jones returned daily to the cathedral to study Gill's reliefs. In his own work, he strived for a similarly modest and elegant way of drawing soldiers, preferably in a religious setting. Just as Gill's Stations of the Cross show the suffering and the holiness of the story of Christ and a very restrained, highly stylized form, Jones wanted to express the seriousness of the Great War in a serene style on paper. But neither the apt vividness of his drawings from the trenches, nor the nostalgic sentimentality of the returned hero sufficed anymore. The propaganda, which continued until long after the war, kept connecting the soldier with the Christ figure, but Jones increasingly began to oppose this. He felt he could no longer dovetail the sacral setting of the Jesus story with a military setting after the war. He believed the

11 Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum: On Capital and Labor*, sect. 3.

12 E. Gill, *Beauty Looks After Herself*, [Intr. by Catherine Pickstock] (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1933), 50–64. Cf. E. Gill, *A Holy Tradition of Working. Passages from the Writings of Eric Gill* (Ipswich: Golgonooza Press, 1983). Cf. J. Hughes, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2007).

romantic image of heroic medieval knights no longer fitted the broken soldiers returning from the trenches.

Instead of glorifying their suffering and comparing it to Christ's, in some of Jones's drawings from after the war, the soldiers themselves turn into those who do the crucifying, rather than being the crucified. He shows the Christ figure being mocked and chased by soldiers in the uniform of the Great War. There is a small painted panel on which Jones places the mocked Christ among shouting soldiers, while one of them kneels down and asks for forgiveness, just as Jones had seen in the barn near the front in France. The style is quite similar to that of Gill, whom he had started to imitate. Drama would no longer determine the form, but instead, the form should distil the drama down to its essence. In retrospect, being attracted to Gill's Catholic style would later become part of Jones's own conversion to Catholicism.

A friend advised him to pay a visit to Eric Gill, whose works fascinated him. He left for the little town of Ditchling in Sussex, where Gill lived in his quasi-religious community of Catholic artists. Right from the start, Jones and Gill got along really well and they developed a kind of master-apprentice relationship. They started to cooperate on the *Trumpington War Memorial* that Gill had already begun. Later on, Jones would even become engaged to Gill's daughter, but this never actually led to marriage. Jones copied Gill's two-dimensional work rather skilfully and convincingly, but Gill's influence on his work during that period could also be considered too strong. To Jones, however, it was a breath of fresh air to be able to work with Gill in the safe environment of his community after the war. It enabled him to find his footing again as an artist. The isolation and the shared Catholic beliefs formed a much needed counter-culture to the disruptions caused by the war.

Conversion: The Catholic Artist

Early on in 1913, Gill had converted to Catholicism, and after their introduction, Jones would soon follow his example. Gill's influence is not the only reason for this move, however. At the end of the street in Brockley where his parents lived, Howson Road, there was a Catholic church he would sometimes visit. Although Jones had been brought up in the Anglican Church, he sometimes considered converting, and he felt particularly attracted to the Catholic imagination. The desire to become Catholic became stronger when he saw Gill's Stations of the Cross at Westminster Cathedral before he had met Gill in person. Jones himself had never been very explicit about the moment of his conversion to Catholicism or his motives. One thing seems to be certain though: there is no direct connection with his wartime experiences. Years later, he did write that he worried about what he called 'dehumanizing modern

technocracy' and that faith was its only antidote. He also believed that only Roman Catholicism had the doctrines and the type of authority that would be of any use against this. However, this idea seems to have been inspired more by the political situation and the ideology around the time when he made these statements in the thirties than by the actual reasons for his conversion in the early twenties.

Jones's conversion was not motivated by explicitly theological or expressly formulated religious motives, although he did later contemplate and write about it. As an artist, the primary attraction he felt was to Catholic sacramental practice. It was not so much the way in which certain sacraments were administered, because some elements of the Anglican Church had a comparable Eucharistic liturgy and a comparable attitude towards the ministry, which even though it was not considered to be 'sacramental', very much looked like that of the Roman Catholic priest. Jones was particularly interested in the creation and reverence of meaningful objects, and the Catholic Church seemed to have this sacramental practice at its core. Gill's highly stylized reliefs and his vision of the life of the artist as a sacramental practice of prayer brought him closer to Catholic faith. In September 1921, shortly after the start of his cooperation with Gill and his move to Ditchling, he converted to Catholicism.

The work at Gill's workshop and in the community was a new experience for Jones, and it offered a completely different environment from his own studio. Apart from the crafts, people at Ditchling were also studying the philosophy of Neo-Thomism, which at that time was the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church. Together, they read the works of Thomas Aquinas and Jacques Maritain, an influential Catholic philosopher of the day. Aquinas's philosophy offered them a vision of the whole of reality. It considered the world from the assumption of a coherent created order that was inherent in all things. At Ditchling, they worked on an illustrated translation of Maritain's *Art et scolastique*, incidentally in cooperation with Joseph O'Connor, the famous priest who would later form the inspiration for G.K. Chesterton's stories about Father Brown. Maritain's book on art and the divine would be a major influence on Jones, and, together with Gill, he was responsible for the illustrations in the English edition of 1923.

In *Art et scolastique*, Maritain tried to find a balance between the gratuitous and the useful.[13] Art should be disinterested, and yet be at the service of a good society, considered to be a combination of the gratuitous and the useful. According to Maritain, art was not just there to be enjoyed, it formed an elementary part of the general purpose of human life. Gill would write several

13 J. Maritain, *Art et Scolastique* (Paris: Librairie de l'Art Catholique, 1920).

essays on the subject during the time that Jones stayed with him. He believed the artist should not try to imitate life to give it a certain meaning, but that, instead, the thing created had its own value and its beauty could not be measured by something else in reality; it could only be judged by the character of the work of art itself, which manifests a natural orientation towards the good.

This Catholic vision of reality saw that the benevolence of the divine order was not just in nature, but also in created objects and human ways of living. This paradigm became very prominent in Jones's work. Influenced by Gill's socialism and the ascendency of Catholic social thought, he regarded creating art as holy labour, aimed toward the common good, which resulted in an enormous capacity for work. Drawings and engravings were produced on a massive scale at Ditchling, including those by Jones.

The sacramental concept of the work of art as a human form of work that can complete the divine order in nature led to a style strongly reminiscent of that of Gill. The subject of his drawings and engravings became explicitly religious. Jones made wood engravings of the Ten Commandments for the magazine *The Game*. The characters in these engravings are pressed up against the sides, as if they are imprisoned within the frame, just like in Gill's Stations of the Cross at Westminster Cathedral. Jones tried to use the space that the material offered as effectively as possible to emphasize the unity of the individual figures and the surroundings in which he depicted them. Around that same time, he made the wall paintings of his studio, depicting moments from the life of Jesus: the annunciation, the birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension. He designed wooden statuettes from small, compact blocks of wood, meant to hold on to whilst praying. He considered them to be objects that brought him closer to the sanctity of life by their nearness, by the way in which they helped him pray and became part of prayer themselves.

4 A Barbed Wire Redemption: Christ on the Battlefield

For a time, Gill considered moving away from Ditchling. The artistic community attracted more and more visitors and there was no more peace and quiet. Moreover, he had financial and personal problems. In 1924, Gill visited an old Benedictine monastery on Caldey Island on the Welsh coast. He found the isolation and the contemplative character particularly attractive. He also considered moving the entire community to distant Galway in the west of Ireland. The Benedictines drew his attention to a group of abandoned monastic buildings at Capel-y-ffin in Wales, close to Hay-on-Wye. Despite the protests from of some of the artists, but also from the Dominican McNabb, who had

meanwhile become closely involved with the community at Ditchling and considered the proximity of London to be essential for the artists, Gill decided to move to this rural area in Wales. For Jones, this was an excellent opportunity to examine his Welsh roots, and he was one of a small group of artists who decided to join Gill and his family.

The World Imposes Itself in Isolation

Jones started painting the area around the village at Capel-y-ffin. To his mind, the Welsh landscape had mythical qualities, especially as he believed this was where his cultural roots lay. During the war he had drawn the villages of the North of France, but these drawings had always been pastoral and impressionist. In his paintings of Capel-y-finn, the landscape forces itself upon the observer and gains an almost stifling quality. The rhythm of the landscape and the small hills do not offer any vistas, and instead close in on us, as if they surround the foreground. In the end, Jones painted the crucifixion of Christ in that landscape, and called it 'Sanctus Christus de Capel-y-ffin'. When he started using Christian iconography in the twenties, he had still been strongly influenced by Gill, who isolated elements of the Christian story from their surroundings and presented them in a highly distilled form. Jones's crucifixion is something completely different: here Christian iconography is placed in the concrete context of his own environment, as if Christ comes closer and enters Jones's life.[14]

In those days he often returned to his parents in Brockley. There he would paint the garden and each sketch would contain more and more fences, until eventually, they filled the entire garden. It appeared as if Jones was seeing the outside world as an ever more claustrophobic and threatening environment, fencing him in. He painted the interior of his parental home and practised painting the world as seen through the curtains, occasionally blurred and occasionally in focus. Jones became adept at showing how the curtain influenced the way in which objects outside are seen. He used watercolours to achieve the effect. Despite the use of watercolours and the fact that he painted objects as seen through the net curtain, the details of the painted objects are more clearly visible. The veil of the curtain and the distance it creates seem to intensify the observation.[15]

14 Cf. R. Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (London: Continuum, 2005).

15 For and extensive overview of David Jones's work, see Miles, Shiel, *David Jones: The Maker Unmade*.

The paintings from this period clearly show that interior and garden, inside and outside, belong together. Jones finds a certain comfort in this. Not by contrasting inside and outside, or by fleeing the menacing garden with its fences to the safety of the parental home, but because it shows what it is that keeps the inside and outside worlds together: the light from outside that is let in by the curtain and, at the same time, makes all the objects outside very different. In his painting 'Flora and calix-light', for example, Jones places a chalice in front of the curtain, and it seems to capture the world outside. It is his way of painting the Holy Ghost: the God who unites everything and keeps the entirety of creation together.

Life in Parenthesis: Christ in the War

The year of 1937 saw the publication of *In Parenthesis*, an almost two hundred page long epic poem, in a style reminiscent of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the apogee of modernist poetry. Just as Eliot uses images, symbols and fragments of text from the history of literature – Homer, Ovid, Vergil, Chaucer, Dante, Shakespeare, etc. – and from various different religious traditions – the Bible, the Upanishads, Augustine, the Book of Common Prayer, etc. – so Jones refers not just to Shakespeare, but also to S.T. Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, and to the Welsh poetry and stories he had known since his childhood: the *Gododdin* and the *Mabinogion*. All these fragments have been woven into the story of the battalion getting ready for battle. In an introduction to a later edition of *In Parenthesis*, Eliot compared Jones's work not just with his own, but also with that of Ezra Pound and James Joyce, and he adds that "the lives of all of us were altered by that war, but David Jones is the only one to have fought in it".[16]

Later in his life, Jones wrote that he considered *In Parenthesis* a good example of the effect a work of art can produce. He believed a work of art is a meaningful form that manifests more than was originally perceived. To be able to experience that, *In Parenthesis* asks its readers to imagine themselves in the trenches and hear what is going on and what the text is putting into words. As so often with poetry, it is best read out loud. Only that will do justice to its play of images, sounds and surroundings. In his preface to the first edition, Jones describes his approach:

> Each person and every event are free reflections of people and things remembered, or projected from intimately known possibilities. I have

16 T.S. Eliot, "Introduction", Jones, *In Parenthesis*, [Eliot's introduction is from the 1961 edition]), vii-viii.

> only tried to make a shape in words, using as data the complex of sights, sounds, fears, hopes, apprehensions, smells, things exterior and interior, the landscape and paraphernalia of that singular time and of those particular men. I have attempted to appreciate some things, which, at the time of suffering, the flesh was too weak to appraise. There are passages which I would exclude, as not having the form I desire – but they seem necessary to the understanding of the whole.[17]

The frontispiece of the first edition of *In Parenthesis* shows a soldier revealing his nakedness by taking off his greatcoat. In the background we see the daily images of the First World War: the barbed wire, the fear, the rifles and the soldiers moving through the woods, on to the next battle. The drawing is chaotic and confusing, like so many of Jones's works from the thirties. It appears to be the imagination of someone who wants to say it all at once, and has lost all sense of order and style. Jones had researched classic and medieval texts while he was writing his epic poem. It seems reasonable, therefore, to assume that the various elements of the frontispiece of *In Parenthesis* have an explicit symbolic meaning. The rider-less horse on the left in the background is sometimes used as a symbol for a funeral ritual. The barbed wire in the foreground symbolizes human captivity and oppression.

The enlarged figure of the soldier in the middle of the drawing is clearly central. But who is it that we see symbolically depicted here, apart from the injured soldier of the First World War who seems to be undergoing a change? The half-nakedness appearing from the greatcoat seems to show us a kind of Adam figure. The one naked foot could be a symbol of solidarity with prisoners, in reference to the prophet Isaiah from the Old Testament, whose unshod state was an expression of his concern for the abominable living conditions of prisoners. The soldier's one naked foot in Jones's drawing could also indicate an initiation: the transition to a different, holy identity, which coincides with a sense of standing on hallowed ground. That would fit with the uniform being thrown off, revealing the vulnerable, naked figure, whose nakedness strongly contrasts with the war in the background and thereby seems to pass judgement on it.

The central figure is cruciform. His limbs seem to be displaced and some wounds are visible. This could be a depiction of Christ showing the vulnerability of human nature. A soldier, who is and is not Christ, who is and is not an Arthur-like or Homeric hero. As mentioned before, during the war state propaganda used to depict the men as soldiers of Christ. Shortly after the war, Jones

17 Jones, *In Parenthesis*, ix-x.

instead painted them as the ones mocking and crucifying Christ. And now it is the soldier himself who is Christ-like, without any trace of heroism. On the contrary, the protection offered by the soldier's greatcoat is removed and the vulnerability thus exposed gives us an even grimmer picture of the surrounding tableau. Contrary to the Christ of Capel-y-ffyn, in which the landscape seems to close in around the crucified Christ, focusing our full attention on the crucifixion itself, in this picture, war is still raging in the background. Thus it becomes an image of what it meant to be a soldier of the Great War, to be the divine sacrifice in the middle of a risky and violent world.

The frontispiece of *In Parenthesis* shows that the history of the war is also a religious history. Christ became present at the Somme, at Passchendaele and at Verdun. That in itself is an idea that was already current during the war itself, as can be seen in the famous poem 'Christ in Flanders' by Lucy Foster Whitmell:

> Now we remember; over here in Flanders –
> (It isn't strange to think of You in Flanders) –
> This hideous warfare seems to make things clear.
> We never thought about You much in England –
> But now that we are far away from England,
> We have no doubts, we know that You are here.[18]

Jones strips Christ's role of every romantic and nostalgic element. He is neither a propaganda symbol of the soldiers' martyrdom, nor a symbol of the victory that had been promised. Here, the crucifixion is not employed as a dramatic or therapeutic instrument to enlarge or, instead, cancel out the horrors of war. The soldier appears as both victim and wounded Christ, and shows the reality of war: the suffering has changed the world to such an extent that right in the middle of it, a silent, vulnerable, and naked Christ has appeared who has shed an entirely new light on the whole of reality, enabling the soldier to get rid of his uniform, even though he is still behind barbed wire.

5 Sign of God: The Sacramental Work of Art

What is the importance of the life of David Jones, the British soldier and draughtsman, who converted to Catholicism and turned poet after the war, in

18 L.Foster Whitmell, "Christ in Flanders", G.H. Clarke, *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War, 1914–1917* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), 163.

the light of the great historical developments at the beginning of the twentieth century? The short and simple answer to that question is: the fact that he painted and put into words a changing reality and, in doing so, has imparted history to us. He understood that history had changed forever, because it had changed in and with him. He did not merely want to report or describe the war, he wanted to show the sacralised reality that paradoxically manifested itself on the battlefield, even though it took him twenty years to realize this. In doing so, he became one of the forerunners of a new Catholic culture, at the core of which is a sacramental world vision. Twenty years after *In Parenthesis*, when the First World War was almost forty years in the past, he described this sacramental world vision in a long essay, *Art and Sacrament*.[19]

As a young man at the Westminster School of Art, Jones had been introduced to post-impressionism. It holds that a work of art is not an impression of something else, but an object in its own right, with its own cohesion and its own relation to the good or the beautiful. Jones believes art is not a pure expression of human will. In its essence, a work of art is not a representation or an expression, but a form of communication. In his essay *Art and Sacrament* from 1955, he writes about the relationship between art and prudence, one of the cardinal virtues. Prudence – the wise, providential outlook – has to do with making judgements and weighing pros and cons, and with the way people look at life. Art does not coincide with prudence, but Jones believes it does form an important supplement to prudential judgements, because it gives form to a moment in our considerations, which cannot be reduced to something else, not even our freedom to judge. In the work of art, we see the gratuitous aspect of life itself. It shows us that not everything can be reduced to functionality, usefulness, or prudence.

By visualizing the gratuitous in an indirect way, a work of art is an embodiment of the sacral, Jones believes. Art shows the real as the good and presents the good as the ultimate reality. In doing so, the artist expresses a certain attachment to the depicted reality and answers to what could be considered a call of duty. The artist endorses that the real is good, and the good is real. Prudence is the realization that follows from it, and it tells us that we are not at the mercy of our own judgements, but that judgement itself is bound to the reality endorsed by the work of art. This view of art and prudence is important for understanding the nature of religious conversion because it shows that religion is not the result of prudence, but rather the opposite, which is of

19 D. Jones, "Art and Sacrament", David Jones, *Epoch and Artist* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008, orig. 1959), 143–179.

consequence to what conversion is: not necessarily the result of a particular meaningful insight, let alone a choice that builds on such an insight.

Nowadays, the common conception is that religion is a form of prudence: a wisdom and an anticipation of reality as it really should be. Jones presents us with the opposite view, however: religion is not a point of view or a vision that we formulate ourselves, it is what has brought us here and, from our point of view, appears as that which cannot be reduced to the common notion of religion-as-prudence, although it does enable us to take on a different perspective on the world. From a sacramental point of view, religion is an endorsement of reality, rather than something which gives meaning. Like artists, religious people know that reality cannot be made to mean something. They know that religious symbolism is a way of 'placing oneself among the signs'. The sacrament does not refer to something else; it is itself a visible sign of the reality that is endorsed with that sacrament. Jones refers to the Jesuit Maurice de la Taille, who once wrote that Christ had "placed himself in the order of signs", a quotation Jones uses as the dedication of his collection of essays, *Epoch and Artist*.[20]

Answering the call to place oneself in a certain order is at the heart of the sacramental, Jones believes. The sacramental is, he writes, the inescapability of a symbolic way of dealing with reality. The aim is not to give meaning to the world, but to communicate with a world which is in itself meaningful. Meaning is a form of communication, but it is not a communication that imposes meaning upon an otherwise dead and meaningless nature, nor is it the creative communication of the artist who looks for forms of self-expression in surroundings that would miss something essential without this self-expression, so that the self would not be able to relate to it.

The sacramental work of art instead visualizes the unity of image and reality: it is the symbolic expression of the realization that every form of communication has natural – physical, real – consequences, and therefore requires a truthful way of dealing with this nature, which we already and always are ourselves. Jones draws no sharp distinction between words and images on the one hand, and the things that are articulated and represented on the other, between meaning and reality, or between sign and signified. He believes that the relation between symbol and reality is what makes humanity human. It is exactly this humanity that the artist portrays in his or her art. The artist does not necessarily do this by depicting or describing a particular human person, but by painting and putting into words what is most fundamentally human.

20 See M. Matthiesen, *Sacrifice as Gift: Eucharist, Grace, and Contemplative Prayer in Maurice de la Taille* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012).

Jones was inspired to connect art and sacrament by Jacques Maritain, who taught him that a work of art is a sacramental act that is about the work created and not about the maker's intentions, or about something else that is merely represented or interpreted in what is made. Just as the Eucharist does not refer to a reality behind the acts reproductively represented in the liturgical context or by the pastor, but is a reality in itself, so the work of art is real and 'objective', according to Jones. In the preface to his other epic poem, *The Anathema*, he describes the challenges that the poet is faced with as an objective problem:

> The problems that confront the poet, as poet, in any given cultural or civilizational phase, no matter what his subjective attitude toward those problems, and though they concern only such elusive matters as the validity of a word, are themselves as is the development of the aero-engine, the fact that my great-uncle William served in the ranks in the Crimea, that the tree outside the window happens to be an acacia, that field-archaeology has changed some of the accents of, e.g. Biblical criticism, that an extension of state control characterizes the period of Valens and Valentinian, and that like effects may possibly have like causes. The poet is born into a given historic situation and it follows that his problems – i.e. his problems as a poet – will be what might be called 'situational problems'. (…) the situational problem which concerns us here is of an equally objective nature.[21]

Jones sees the work of art as an extension of nature, but at the same time it is an image of that nature and, as an image, it visualizes the meaning of nature. By being an image of nature at the same time, it changes that nature. So, on the one hand, art is bound to nature but, on the other, nature does not fully exhaust the possibilities of the imaginative form. On the contrary, the work of art is a constantly new expression of the abundance of forms that lies enclosed in nature. Thus, the body of Christ is real like nature, but it is also the sacrament that is the visible expression of that which is already present in nature.

The danger of such a comparison between works of art and the sacrament could be that the sacrament is understood symbolically in the following way: as an act by which believers creatively give meaning to an objective nature, e.g. that of human existence, but this is not what Jones had in mind. Art is not added value, just as faith is not the added value to an otherwise meaningless

21 D. Jones, *The Anathemata. Fragments of an Attempted Writing* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010, orig. 1952), 23.

nature. The work of art becomes the entire object of which it is, at the same time, the representation, made by the artist, rather than being merely a reproduction of some typical aspects of that object, so that it shows some coincidences with it and signifies it as it is signified by it. What can be an ambiguous experience to our normal consciousness, viz. the fact that the world and imagination need to be separate to be able to maintain a creative tension is one single event to the artist: on the one hand in the attention to the things that surround us, and on the other by putting the nature of this given in perspective to such an extent that the given can emerge from it in a new, gratuitous form.

6 Conclusion

In *Grace and Necessity*, Rowan Williams writes that Jones was aware of what he calls the 'archaeological' aspects of human experience.[22] He believes creating meaning is only possible through signs that have a history, a history that will continue in every new modelling of these signs. The artist who uses symbols as metaphors to express meaning should be aware of the scope of human archaeology. Williams thinks this is closely connected to Jones's conversion to Roman Catholicism: he recognised 'a trail left in history', which then became unavoidable and without which everything became meaningless. If you do not know where you are and where you are from, you cannot make a sign. After all, the question about sign-making is: A sign of what? And what for? Without an awareness of the archaeology of signs, any answer to these questions can only be arbitrary. Without the human history of imagination, there could not have been a priest at the altar, who in some way represented the redeeming power of God.

It is precisely this human history, both the concrete and the represented, that was 'put into parenthesis' on the battlefield. On that same battlefield, Jones's soldier changes into the naked figure of Christ. The horrors of war produced a work of art that reveals the truly human as a wound and as victimhood. Thus it becomes clear – and maybe it is particularly because of these circumstances – that human life is eminently meaningful and can become a sign. Here, sacramental imagination shows the true *religio*: not in the connections we create through dialogue, the giving of meaning or the forming of communities, but in the constitution of an inner communality that reveals itself in us being signs and our sign-making to become signs: the symbolic creation of art

22 Williams, *Grace and Necessity*, 43–90.

in the light of God's love. In that way, a work of art follows the basic sacramental structure of every human conversion: I am not looking, I find, and I turn myself into a sign: a sign of what makes this sacrament, the being-found and the searching, possible.

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PART 2

Ignatian Voices

CHAPTER 6

A Theatre of Desire: The Philosophical Meaning of the Ignatian Exercises

Inigo Bocken

The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* form the core of Ignatian spiritual practice, from the beginning of the religious order up until the present. They are well known as one of the most important guides for the practice of meditation in the Christian tradition. Since their primary purpose is to be used as a guide for spiritual practice, they are not the most likely candidate for a model of philosophical reasoning. "What seems to me white, I will believe black if the hierarchical Church so defines". This sentence, which can be found in the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*,[1] seems to suggest that the opposite is true, that the meditation, as it is developed here, is more about authority and obedience than any reflective use of reason. Moreover, in contemporary culture there seems to be a tension between the experiential practice of meditation and the rather more cognitive act of reflection. Any attempt at understanding the philosophical meaning of the *Spiritual Exercises* will evokes the more general question on the relation between spirituality and rationality.

In spite of Ignatius's emphasis on obedience and authority, the innovative meditative practice as it is presented in the *Spiritual Exercises* is often characterized as the starting point of a new way of theorizing one's personal relation with the divine. In his marvellous collection of articles on Ignatius "as a human being and as theologian", Hugo Rahner – himself a Jesuit – described the enterprise of the *Spiritual Exercises* as the foundation of an innovative way of dealing with the relation between theory and practice, and as a genuinely modern understanding of the concrete and the abstract.[2] Even if Rahner does not develop this idea to its full consequences, I think he may have a point here. The reception history of the *Spiritual Exercises* shows that these are not minor thinkers who revert to the original intuitions of the Exercises, or to its innovative method – as it is, e.g., the case in René Descartes's *Meditationes de prima*

1 *Spiritual Exercises*, Translated by E. Mullan, S.J., par. 365, Thirteenth Rule.

2 H. Rahner, *Ignatius als Mensch und Theologe* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1964), 312.

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philosophia.[3] The question as to what extent Descartes's methodological philosophy can be read in an Ignatian way, is still unanswered, but there can be no discussion that Descartes himself, trained by the Jesuits in La Flèche, was indeed inspired by the method of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

Later on in history – especially in the twentieth Century – several creative attempts at reflective interpretations were made. In our age, Maurice Blondel's philosophy of action is a clear and influential example of a philosophical elaboration of Ignatius's spiritual intuitions.[4] Even more famous is undoubtedly Roland Barthes's semiotic interpretation of the *Spiritual Exercises*, in which he regards them as a practice of decoding human desire.[5] Moreover, as important scholars such as Karen Kilby and Philip Endean have noticed, Karl Rahner's transcendental method is actually a systematic elaboration of the discretion of the spirits and the search for God's will.[6] Finally, the *Spiritual Exercises* play an important role in the analysis of modern desire as it can found in the work of the French historian and philosopher Michel de Certeau.[7]

In spite of a large number of studies on Jesuit spirituality, so far there has not been a systematic analysis of the philosophical reception of the *Spiritual Exercises*. This is beyond the scope the present contribution, however. Before any such project could be undertaken, we need to ask how Ignatius conceives his spiritual project – how his imagination and textual staging are structured and how these can be understood against the background of the spiritual and speculative challenges of his time. That is why I have chosen to focus on the means of Ignatian reflection in my contribution. Understanding the *Spiritual Exercises* as a way of thinking inevitably means discussing the modes of expression of philosophical thought.

For Ignatius, this involves studying not only his use of language, but also his use of images. In the end, the whole of life, in all its concrete personal aspects, seems to be a reflexive performance. It is this private and concrete practice, however, which has to become a living image, which brings into appearance the will of God. In this present text, I will use the work of the Jesuit scholar

3 The influence of Ignatius on Descartes's work, including the Meditations, has been recognized and discussed by many historians. An evaluative overview can be found in: Z. Vendler, "Descartes' Exercises", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 19/2 (1989), 193–224.

4 K. Boey, "Blondel in het licht van Ignatius' geestelijke oefeningen", *Bijdragen. Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 55 (1994), 399–411.

5 R. Barthes, *Sade, Fourrier, Loyola* (Paris: Seuil, 1971).

6 Ph. Endean, *Karl Rahner and Ignatian Spirituality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); K. Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Philosophy and Theology* (London: Routledge, 2004).

7 M. de Certeau, "L'espace du désir ou le 'Fondement' des Exercices Spirituels", *Christus* 20/77 (1973), 118–128.

Michel de Certeau to guide me in my exploration of Ignatius's life and thought. De Certeau has understood very well that the way Ignatius dealt with imagination can be seen as an answer to the speculative crisis of metaphysics and theology at the end of the Middle Ages – the so called 'nominalist' crisis, which marked the end of the classical ideal of knowledge and action – the idea of *theoría* or contemplation. Certeau's interpretation is characterized by a high degree of sensitivity to the performative aspects of spiritual and philosophical discourses. The different ways thoughts, observations, actions and feelings are expressed, help us to discover a proper way of thinking. Theoretical reflection will no longer be limited to just one form and find its expression in for example painting, politics, poetry, mysticism or architecture.

In order to explore this further, we need to return to Ignatius and his *Spiritual Exercises*. They appear as the guideline for a practice in which the whole of life – with all its shadows, ruptures, empty spaces, colours, odours, thoughts, and desires – can be seen as a space for ideas and visions. In the text of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius refers again and again towards the importance of the senses in the search for God's will.[8]

1 Theory and Practice in Christian Spirituality

In order to understand the Spiritual Exercises, it is important to realize that the text, as it was written by Ignatius after his mystical experience in Manresa, is not meant to be read like a treatise. Rather, it is a spiritual guide for the one who is seeking God. Jesuits typically speak of the *Spiritual Exercises* as a book which should be performed rather than read. But what does it mean to say that one has to *do* something in order to understand what is at stake? And what kind of understanding are we talking about? Is this something which can only be said after one has completed the *Spiritual Exercises*? Or *is* the act the same as the understanding?

These are of the kinds of questions that need to be asked with respect to any spiritual manuals in the history of Christian spirituality. The *Spiritual Exercises* are part of a long tradition of meditation literature and guidelines (*manuductiones*) which offer guiding, categories and criteria for discernment in order to

8 J. Sudbrack, "Die Anwendung der Sinne als Angelpunkt für Theorie und Praxis der Exerzitien", in: M. Sievenich (ed.), *Ignatianisch: Eigenart und Methode der Gesellschaft Jesu* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1990), 96–119; H. Rahner, "Die Anwendung der Sinne in der Betrachtungsmethode des Ignatius von Loyola", H. Rahner, *Ignatius von Loyola als Mensch und Theologe* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1964), 344–369.

see God. With the help of these criteria and categories, the reader can find out for himself or herself how to proceed along the spiritual path. Even in the tradition of the Desert Fathers, who in their solitude were permanently exposed to false impulses, we can find the need for a criterion by which to discern the truth from illusion, i.e. discerning God from the devil.[9] There is no doubt that Ignatius refers to this tradition when he writes his spiritual guidelines. He is well aware of this tradition.[10]

For centuries after the Desert Fathers, medieval spiritual authors were inspired by Aristotle's doctrine of virtues. Virtues were, in their view, a mediation between concrete life and the ultimate goal towards which our life is oriented and which is always in danger of being forgotten.[11] Of course, Ignatius of Loyola was not a philosopher. In a way he was the complete opposite of the philosopher. He was a soldier, a man of practice, often infuriated, sometimes sentimental. He left no philosophical texts and he was well into his thirties by the time he started his philosophical training, probably having completed most of the *Spiritual Exercises* by then. This book is about the practice of meditation – it is meant to be a guide for all those who search for God. Nevertheless, we can safely assume that he was very well aware of the crisis of classical spiritual paradigms. It is plausible that he understood very well that the (intellectual and social) developments of his time were no longer compatible with the classical doctrines of virtue and spiritual manuals. He seems to have seen the need for a new relation between theory and practice.

The *Spiritual Exercises* repeatedly insist – by way of the spiritual guide – that one should not reflect in a theoretical manner about a certain problem, e.g. about the Holy Spirit or about death. Philosophical deliberations can endanger the vivid experience of the event and risk distracting us from the vision of God. Nevertheless, I think that the *Spiritual Exercises* not only presuppose a philosophical problem, they also give a clear definition of that problem and offer strategies for its solution. Ignatius identifies the problem as the increasing uncertainty of all human knowledge at the end of the Middle Ages.[12] This uncertainty is caused by the idea that there is an unbridgeable chasm between human and divine intellect. As a consequence, human reason does not have

9 K. Waaijman, *Handbuch der Spiritualität. Formen: Grundlagen, Methoden* (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald, 2007), 23ff.

10 See H. Rahner, *Ignatius als Mensch und Theologe*, 22.

11 U. Störmer-Caysa, *Einführung in die mittelalterliche Mystik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2004).

12 M. Gerwing, "Devotio Moderna oder: Zur Spiritualität des Spätmittelalters", J. Aertsen, M. Pickavé (eds.), *Herbst des Mittelalters? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), 594–616, 602.

access to the divine intellect and its criteria. This means that all spiritual models and manuals for the search for God up to that point, from the Desert Fathers to Hugh of St. Victor or Bonaventura, are now somehow superseded. This chasm between human and divine intellect has of course always been a central theme in the history of Christian spirituality. Ignatius's approach is different, however. He is a product of the sixteenth century, a modern man, fascinated by the will of God, which is at the centre of all his considerations. Like late medieval voluntarism, he considers this will to be so strong that the mediating virtues are unmasked as weak attempts to control or to manipulate the divine will itself. In this regard, Ignatius is confronted with the same challenge as Luther in his critique of scholastic philosophy.[13]

It is no longer possible to trust the traditional spiritual pathways, which describe the stages on the way towards the vision of God, which just have to be done or merely performed. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, one has to start anew. The aim of the *Spiritual Exercises* is nothing less than a completely new staging of one's entire life. This is what Michel de Certeau understood very well when he described the *Spiritual Exercises* as a "space of desire".[14] The text of the exercises does not present any theological or philosophical visions. Instead, it offers mostly formal descriptions of procedures, as one of the first companions of Ignatius, Pierre Favre, already remarked.[15] The reader is confronted with a purely methodological book, an empty procedure, which has to be filled by whoever is doing the exercises.

We need to realize that Ignatius wrote the book after his original experience in Manresa, where he felt he had been touched by God. Wounded as a soldier at the battle of Pamplona, Ignatius read some spiritual books, and became convinced that he wanted to live like Jesus Christ. He intended to walk to the Holy Land in order to radically change his life.

2 An Experimental Theatre of Desire

Political circumstances made it impossible to travel from Venice to the Holy Land turned, however. Ignatius took this as a sign that his enterprise was still too much fashioned after his own ideas and desires. He realized that he was still trying to perform God's will on his own terms. In other words, his life was still as much marked by sin as it was before his conversion. What he said he

13 See Ph. Endean, "Ignatius in Lutheran Light", *The Month*, 24 (1991), 271–278.

14 M. de Certeau, *Le lieu de l'autre: Histoire religieuse et mystique* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), 239.

15 Cf. Certeau, *Le lieu de l'autre*, 245.

desired – and that what he really desired – turned out to be unbearably different, and this would lead to a kind of mental explosion like in his experience in La Storta.[16] This made him aware that he was permanently avoiding following this deeper desire (as it is called by Certeau), even when he travelled barefoot and intended to imitate Christ by living like an ascetic. This ascetic lifestyle also bore the mark of a hidden, deeper desire that cannot be determined by explicit images of the will.

Ignatius halted his pilgrimage and came to the conclusion that there is only one goal in life: to discover the real desire that motivates the many things we pursue, but which also can be hampered by this pursuit.[17] For no matter how conscientiously we follow any spiritual program, there is always a risk we will stray. It is this genuinely early modern theme of uncertainty, which can also be found in Ignatius's considerations. This insight explains the procedural form of the exercises. For human beings, it is impossible to find a way to know God's will once and for all. It is impossible to take an external position – as scholastic philosophy did – in order to determine the right order of reality. We are always driven by desire, even when we are able to discern what corresponds to this desire and what does not. The discernment may be realized on different levels of reality – it always requires a formal procedure. Real desire only can be found in concrete discernments.

There has been a lot of discussion about the austere form of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Totally different authors, such as Hugo Rahner and Roland Barthes, have pointed out that the success of the book of was a miracle in itself: the language Ignatius uses is rather coarse and it lacks any form of poetry, so the mere success of the book could already be seen as proof of its truthfulness and authenticity. This language, which offers no enjoyment whatsoever, shows us that it is not the well-formulated sentences or impressive constructions of thought that count. Instead, language functions to make space for something else – for a form of action oriented towards the desire for God. As Certeau pointed out, this action is oriented towards the other and, as such, it opens up a space for the desiring soul.

The *Spiritual Exercises* are nothing less than a form of staging, a *mise en scene*, complete with instructions for the director, in order to open up a space for the soul. Ignatius intends to communicate his new insight to others: we are

16 H. Rahner, "Die Vision des heiligen Ignatius in der Kapelle von La Storta", H. Rahner, *Ignatius als Mensch und Theologe*, 53–108.

17 'Desire' is one of the central topics of Christian mysticism, of which Ignatius was very well aware. This is shown in a clear way by Michel de Certeau in his books on the history of mysticism of 16th and 17th Century – *La fable mystique* (1984 and 2013).

involved in the process of desire, even before we become aware of it. At the same time, every individual person has to experience this awareness from his or her own position. The instructions, in this way, are quite pliable. Sometimes Ignatius mentions that we have to find out for ourselves whether and how we want to sit down or stand, maybe get down on our knees, or perhaps stay in a small room or go for a walk. These acts in and of themselves are not very important. What is important is whether any of these positions can be helpful for achieving an insight into this deeper desire, in order not to be guided by 'unordered' desires. A lack of food, for example, would have us thinking about eating the whole time.

The *Spiritual Exercises* are about the stories from the life of Jesus. Nevertheless, these stories are not – as Roland Barthes shows – the *libretto* of some kind of theatrical performance that is part of the exercises. The different scenes from the life of Jesus are in fact the setting, the background giving more relief to the performance. The libretto has – in the words of Certeau – not been written.[18] It is written through *acting*, like in any form of experimental theatre in which the actors are not performing some fixed text by heart, but are just expressing what comes to mind while they are on stage. The stories from the life of Jesus are a setting and a mirror, explaining the desires of the actor. Here, the spiritual guide is not a spectator – he is actually more like a director's assistant, correcting the actor from his experience and his knowledge of the text and rules of the exercises. Sometimes he corrects the actor's imagination and discusses how to better express it.

3 The *Devotio Moderna* and the Logic of Performance

The staging of the *Spiritual Exercises* has a long tradition. Ignatius found the sources for his performative approach in the texts of the *Devotio Moderna*, the influential religious reform movement in fifteenth century Northern Europe. The most famous expression of this tradition is without any doubt Thomas à Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*. There has been a lot of discussion about the reception of the *Devotio Moderna* in the work of Ignatius.[19] In a way, the Spiritual Exercises can be seen as a methodologically well-founded elaboration of the

18 Certeau, *Le lieu de l'autre*, 246.

19 E.g. G. Maron, *Ignatius von Loyola: Mystik – Theologie – Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 236; K. Baier, *Meditation und Moderne* (Würzburg: Schönhausen & Neumann Verlag, 2009), 82.

insights that can also be found in Thomas à Kempis's spiritual manual, itself an expression of the spiritual practices of the *Devotio Moderna*.

The *Devotio Modera* was a reform movement in the Netherlands, which also had some influence in Germany. Founded by Geert Groote, it was successful in the emancipated cities in both the Southern and Northern part of the Netherlands. In a way, the *Devotio Moderna* was an emancipation movement in which craftsmen, tradesmen, or politicians claimed that the spiritual path of *imitating Christ* was not exclusively for learned people or for the monks in their monasteries who were able to read in Latin.[20]

The vision of God was not reserved for those who knew the scholastic theoretical definitions, written in Latin.[21] "Our practice at the spinning wheel is the highest form of theory", as one of the sister books from Emmerich, one of the many community houses of that time, puts it.[22] The imitation of Christ has nothing to do with doctrinal or theological knowledge, which come from an outside perspective. The imitation of Christ is realized through the work in the garden or in the kitchen or even in the practice of reading. In the end, nobody can claim to have exact knowledge about this spiritual path. It is a way of acting, a performative practice.

As a book of exercises and practices, the *De imitatione Christi* is a book with admonitions and smaller reflections, mirrors for the life of the soul, and it is the result of extensive experience in spiritual guidance. 'Imitatio Christi' in fact means to become an image of Christ yourself. Sometimes Thomas is very critical towards philosophical reasoning with regard to this ideal: 'it is better to practice compunction as to know its definition,' he says, almost ironically, in Book I.3 of *De imitatione Christi*. This should be read for what it is, however: a critique of some forms of Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophy, which often claim that reason is able to understand everything, and that we can come to know exactly who God is and what His qualities are.[23] Thomas's comments are

20 C. van Ginhoven Rey, "The Jesuit Instrument: On Saint Ignatius of Loyola's Modernity," R.A. Maryks (eds), *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writings, Spirituality and Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 204; J. Brodrick, *Ignatius of Loyola. The Pilgrim Years* (New York: Farrar, 1956), 22; A. Deblaere, "Gerlach Peters (1378–1411): Mysticus van de onderscheiding van de geesten", A. Deblaere, *Essays on Mystical Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 97–112.

21 R. van Dijk, *Twaalf Kapittels over ontstaan, bloei en doorwerking van de Moderne Devotie* (Hilversum: Ten Have, 2012), 12.

22 A. Bollmann, *Schwesternbuch und Statuten des St.-Agneskonvent in Emmerich* (Emmerich: Emmericher Geschichtsverein, 1998), 20.

23 I. Bocken, "The Language of the Layman: The Meaning of *imitation Christi* for a Theory of Spirituality", *Studies in Spirituality* 15(2005), 217–249.

in fact a way of staging, enabling the seeker to find his or her own way of imitating in practice. Our practical life is the stage on which the Gospel can be re-enacted. This also means that the imitation of Christ has to be started over and over again. We are always in danger of thinking we know how to live in an authentic manner. This knowledge is often an obstacle, or a mask, enabling us to hide who we really are.

The exercitant has to discern for himself or herself, and should not listen too much to what other people are saying – which is one of the favourite sentiments of Thomas a Kempis.[24] "Whatever people are saying, the ordinary as well as the learned ones, let them become silent within you", Thomas writes.[25] Nor is this all about our own judgements – these can be as alienating as other people's judgements, perhaps even more so.[26] In the end, only God's judgment matters, but we are unable to know this judgment. We do, however, see the shadows of our own life, obscuring God's judgment. If we look closely, however, we may be able to distinguish between light and dark.[27]

A similar approach is found in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Ignatius emphasizes that we need to find our own individual paths. Nothing in this world, no theology or scholastic philosophy, can discover what God wants. Of course, there are always people claiming to have knowledge about the will of God, but one should avoid this kind of naïve self-deception. Nevertheless, Ignatius really believes that it is possible to gradually discover the real desire which can be identified with God's desire.[28]

This is the final goal of the *Spiritual Exercises*: to be filled with the content of concrete life. Personal experiences are extremely important – at least for those who surrender themselves to this *mise en scene*. Emotions should be taken very seriously as they are movements of the soul.[29] They tell us about our desires. The movements of the soul are, as Roland Barthes shows in his analysis of the *Spiritual Exercises*, a code which should be deciphered to be

24 E.g. *De imitatione Christi* I,10, und I, 20, ed. R. van Dijk (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok, 2008), 66f.

25 "Taceant omnes doctores sileant universe creature in conspectu tuo: tu mihi loquere solis," *Imitatio Christi* I, 3, 12 (van Dijk 34).

26 Ibid. 1, 14.

27 I. Bocken, 'De verinnerlijking van het licht', K. Waaijman (ed.), *Nuchtere mystiek: Navolging van Christus* (Hilversum: Ten Have, 2006), 69–76.

28 *Spiritual Exercises*, Preliminary Remarks, Annotation 1.

29 *Spiritual Exercises*, Preliminary Remarks, Annotation 3: "As in all the following Spiritual Exercises, we use acts of the intellect in reasoning, and acts of the will in movements of the feelings: let us remark that, in the acts of the will, when we are speaking vocally or mentally with God our Lord, or with His Saints, greater reverence is required on our part than when we are using the intellect in understanding".

able to understand God's desire, which is, in the end, our own deepest desire. This is to be found in concrete life, in images and experiences, or even in the memories of a taste.[30] The actor of the *Spiritual Exercises* is performing an exercise by telling his or her own stories on the stage before the only spectator of this experimental theatre, God, for whom nothing remains hidden, and who is able to see everything at the same time and understand the deeper connections and contexts. It leaves the person performing the exercises with an ever greater awareness of his or her deep involvement in the process of desire, and frees him or her from the duty of having comprehensive theoretical knowledge of his or her own stories. It is in telling these stories, and in the production of images and scenes, that he is able to see better how shadows and light become manifest in one's life.

4 *Consolatio* and *Desolatio*

The exercitant is an active participant. He or she is as creative as an artist. This, however, does not mean that the exercitant has to start from scratch reconstruct the whole story. It is the other way around – we begin by telling the story, only to discover the possibilities and impossibilities we were unable to see before. The creativity is in telling about new and unique things, in finding new images and ways of speaking about something – all these are present already in the material of his own actual life, however.

The exercitant creates images and at the same time surrenders himself or herself to them, thereby also becoming a passive observer of these images. Later on, the exercitant is sometimes required to resist concrete longings – not always, but mainly to have the experience that it is possible to misunderstand one's own desire. For example: Ignatius requires us to pray a little longer when we do not feel like praying, or to forgo dinner when we are hungry. Through all this, Ignatius warns us again and again never to exaggerate. Resisting one's longings is not an ultimate goal. These exercises should be done only in order to learn what the ultimate desire is in order to reach the point where God's desire and human desire converge.

The categories of thinking, introduced by Ignatius, are as simple as they are clear. It is all about the discernment between consolation and desolation – *consolatio* and *desolatio*.[31] Through acting out the exercises, we learn to

30 P.-A. Favre, *Ignace de Loyola: Le lieu de l'image* (Paris: Vrin – Éditions de l'EHESS, 1992), 10 and passim.

31 *Spiritual Exercises* Third Rule, Fourth Rule, Fifth Rule.

discern which emotions bring consolation and which lead to desolation, inasmuch as we show our self to God's gaze and ask what it is to see like God. Both categories are deduced from that which can be found about God in the Tradition, for God cannot want that we live in desolation. Consolation, therefore, is more original, though our life is a constantly shifting balance between consolation and desolation. This primacy of consolation is in fact the only necessary condition for the participation in this performance. It still remains possible for us to err and take a decision which will lead to desolation. Learning to see this is the goal of the exercises. Consolation and desolation are different for every human being. God does not desire the same thing for every individual. In the contrast of our emotions and experiences, we are able to discern the direction of our lives without ever being completely certain. In his comment on the German translation of the Spiritual Exercises, Hans Urs von Balthasar constantly refers to the comparative character of Ignatius's use of language. The act of comparing does indeed form the basic structure of the Exercises. Human experience and knowledge are marked by this unavoidable comparative character, since man is never able to withdraw from this comparative dimension. Nonetheless, it is possible to find a higher, superlative dimension in this endless comparison – the ultimate desire, the goal of the Spiritual Exercises. It is at that point that this becomes manifest in the intriguing chapter, 'Principle and Fundament', that:

> Man is created in order to praise God, man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him as to it. For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created.[32]

32 *Spiritual Exercises*, 23, Principle and Foundation, Translation Father E. Mullan, S.J. (New York: Kennedy & Sons, 1914).

This only becomes manifest at the moment that the exercitant becomes aware of the permanent process of comparison, and in this awareness discovers the foundations of this process.

Through comparing these dimensions, we learn that desolation is a modus of consolation. The fact that we can know this modus presupposes that we desire consolation. These are the kind of experiences of contrast to which Ignatius constantly refers: the shadows in our own life we will never be rid of, but which can be understood as the framework for the visibility within the light. As human beings we live between light and shadow. We are unable to reject the shadow, but we are able to move between light and shadow, so that the latter serves as a contrast to the light, as this is the case in Caravaggio, an artist who himself was fascinated by the *Spiritual Exercises.*[33]

This line of reasoning should help us to understand the somewhat mystical formula introduced by Ignatius when he discusses the task of learning to see, taste, smell and so on. This task of discerning experience is important, since it mirrors how one might discern between experiences coming from God and those coming from the devil – from a 'weak angel'.[34] While the devil is a weak and fallen angel, the desolation he represents is not as original as consolation. Discernment (*discretio*) also means that one is able to experience the absence of consolation in the state of desolation. This is the case because desolation is the unmediated tension between God's desire and one's own concrete desire. The main, fundamental insight is that there is nothing within this world that is mere consolation. In reality, everything is moving between darkness and light, since we are never without sin, but no state is too sinful not to contain at least a trace of light.

The only certainty is that of the decision. This can be any decision, depending from one's personal imagination. Every decision entails a certain risk of losing control, but a decision also opens up space for that which comes toward us. As such, it may help us to understand Ignatius's difficult remarks on obedience and on the role of the church to which I referred to at the beginning of this contribution. This space allows us to understand that every decision is embedded in a practical and social context. Such a decision is not made by a purely autonomous subject. The discernment of the spirits can help us to see that the decision was already made before we started thinking about the decision. The real decision we have to make is the decision to say yes to the deepest desire – God's desire within ourselves.

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33 J.F. Chorpenning, "Another Look at Caravaggio and Religion", *Artibus et Historiae* 8/16 (1987), 149–158.

34 *Spiritual Exercises*, Second Exercise, third point.

'Sin', in this case, does not refer to actual moral discourses or decisions, since we are never completely sure what is morally desirable and what is not. It is no mere coincidence that the *Spiritual Exercises* would later inspire moral probabilism.[35] This ethical position revolves around the basic lack of certainty pertaining to moral judgments. This ethical school, promoted by the Jesuit order, again and again explored the possibility of the immoral character of moral principles. It suffices to discern acceptable principles of conscience, to take a decision, in the knowledge that there is no ultimate certainty. In some contexts, moral principles can have totally immoral consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to understand these in a broader context and with pragmatic sensitivity. Again, we find the mechanism of comparison that can also be found in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Certainty is a matter of decision, and it comes about only after the process of comparison. The opposition between consolation and desolation remains decisive. When Ignatius discusses sin, it has to do with the rejection of consolation. We live in sin when we connect our whole life to one set reality and, therefore, we have a false understanding of the order of that reality. This will lead to a restlessness which hampers our actions, as we are able to develop an awareness that whatever we desire, it is not our real desire.

It is generally known that the *Spiritual Exercises* prescribe a program that spans four weeks. In these weeks, the exercitant attempts to meditate upon the life of Jesus, which is similar to Thomas a Kempis's *De imitatione Christi*. It is remarkable that Ignatius dedicates the whole first week to the problem of sin. During this week, the exercitant becomes aware that his or her desire is always connected with worldly goals. Although this is unavoidable, it is possible to see the difference between what our deepest desire is – which is at the same time God's desire – and that which we believe to be our desire. We can learn to distinguish this unavoidable difference, when we focus on the ruptures and unexpected movements within our life. Ignatius constantly stresses moments like these, especially when he refers to the life of Jesus: the perplexity of Mary, for example, when she hears from the angel Gabriel that she is pregnant, or the moment when Lazarus returns to the world of the living. Again, we see contrasts Ignatius emphasizes and which also help us to see our sinfulness: discernment of the spirits (*discretio spirituum*), living without certainty, the concrete image of our life as a space for the discovery of the unexpected desire and the ability to make these images new – all these aspects form the basic structure of the Spiritual Exercises as a practice of thinking. These aspects

35 P. Schmitz, "Probabilismus: Das Jesuitischste aller Moralsysteme", Sievenich (Hg.), *Ignatianisch* (Anm. 11), 354–368; Inigo Bocken, "Aequitas: Gerechtigkeit in actu von Thomas von Aquin bis Suarez", in: *Coincidentia* 5/2 (2014), 46–58.

form the basic logic of these spiritual practices. The Spiritual Exercises use these to come to a comparison without a fixed point within, or based upon, daily reason. This comparative character, however, is fundamental to human existence. During the Spiritual Exercises, we learn to play with the contrasts of life before the only true spectator – God – so that we learn to discern the essential decision, which was made already before we were even born. To able to see this however, we first need to take another decision, we need to have the desire really see it. This where the categories of consolation and desolation come into play.[36] In a way, this spiritual program can be seen as a condensed form of the eternal desire present within one's life. It is a form of thinking that helps us discern without becoming dependent on any earthly reality – for this would mean the loss of space.

Although the *Spiritual Exercises* are an exclusively spiritual program, it is remarkable how its dynamic logical structure has been received in various fields and by authors and artists who are not directly part of any spiritual canon. This essay has attempted to show how the spiritual exercises also presuppose a model for reasoning which focuses on how to deal with human desire, while also attempting to not become hemmed in by the limits of reason itself. Perhaps this is the reason why Ignatius's way of thinking can be seen as distinctly modern. The relation between will and reason, between the heart and reason, between experiencing and thinking, is one of the main challenges of Modernity. Ignatius, through the *Spiritual Exercises*, seems to offer a basis for dealing with these relations. I already mentioned to Caravaggio and his play with darkness and light, and I noticed that Maurice Blondel, with his 'philosophy of action', sees his own project as an answer to the dramatic chasm between both dimensions of human existence, and I believe he found his inspiration in the Ignatian exercises. As I said at the beginning of this contribution, this philosophical reception history is a project which still has to be developed further. For now, I want to close with a short reference to the philosophy of René Descartes. Descartes is not well known as an Ignatian philosopher, and he is often, too often perhaps, characterized as the first modern philosopher who instigated the modern separation of body and mind, of will and reason, et cetera. He is often seen as the original philosopher of technocratic reason, of the ideology of control, and so on. Understanding Descartes against the back-

36 Consolation is a central theme of late medieval and early modern religion, as Ronald Rittgers showed recently: R.K. Rittgers, "Grief and Consolation in Early Lutheran Devotion", *Church History* 81 (2012), 601–630. Consolation is also a central topic in *De imitatione Christi*.

ground of Ignatius could open up new perspectives on the real nature of the Cartesian project.

4 Descartes's Meditations and Ignatius's Exercises

In his famous book, *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641), Descartes (1596–1660), himself a Jesuit, uses a technique very similar to the *Spiritual Exercises* when he simply sits down in his chair and starts asking which knowledge is deceptive and which is not. It is just like Ignatius's *discretio spirituum*. Also, for Descartes, the will of God is constitutive and, just as Ignatius did, he attempts to reach a point in which we can trust that our relation towards the world is well ordered.

There is, however, a clear and symptomatic difference between Descartes and Ignatius. As soon as the relation between the interior and exterior world is guaranteed by the real idea of God, Descartes seems to forget God, or at least does not need Him anymore. In Ignatius's meditations, the limit between interior and exterior remains present. According to Ignatius, we always have to be aware of our use of the discernment of the spirits, permanently questioning our desire, permanently making more space in order to make our will conform more closely to God.

It may be true that Descartes focuses on the process of knowledge. In his analysis of Descartes's *Meditations*, against the background of the *Spiritual Exercises*, the American philosopher of language, Zeno Vendler, stresses the need to avoid exaggerating the differences between the two authors. From the perspective of the *Spiritual Exercises*, we see the necessity of a focus on an inner reform of the will.[37] From this perspective, the Cartesian meditations do not deliver anything new to the fundamental and obsessive search for certainty. Instead, they focus on the necessity of philosophical thought on the dependencies and inner relation between thinking and the real world. According to Vendler, Descartes is searching for an original desire as well, a desire that precedes existence. Vendler shows quite convincingly that the problem of an exaggerated difference between both authors is mainly due to readers who are part of the philosophical tradition and who tend to think that the meditative form of Descartes's text is only an external form. Instead, Descartes's philosophy seems to focus around a choice for consolation.[38]

37 Z. Vendler, "Descartes' Exercises", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 19(1989), 193–224, 219.

38 Later on it was Maurice Blondel who discussed the unity of meditative practice and epistemology again. His philosophy of action is nothing else as an attempt to explain the

5 Conclusion

Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* show how there are always reflective moments in day-to-day human life with its constant comparing, and they show how thinking is involved in this process of comparing. This reflection presupposes the ability of taking accurate decisions. According to Ignatius, one's spiritual life can no longer exist outside of society, such as in an isolated monastery. The *Spiritual Exercises* pertain to the whole of life, even if they take only thirty days to complete. They can be seen as condensed 'performances of thinking'. In this experimental theatre, God is the only spectator. It is the goal of *the Spiritual Exercises*, to become aware of the possibility of consolation and to see the dangers of desolation, and to find the possibility to develop a creative form of life within the connection between both.

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necessity of a practical decision within knowledge. See K. Boey, "Blondel in het licht van Ignatius' geestelijke oefeningen", 405.

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CHAPTER 7

Temptation as Conversion: The Architecture of the Sant'Andrea al Quirinale and the *Ductus* of Conversion

Arnold Smeets

1 Introduction

Temptation seems to be irreconcilable with conversion. If conversion is often portrayed as a turn for the better, temptation is perceived as its opposite: a turn for the worse. Temptations are everywhere and they are always dangerous. That is why the faithful pray, reciting the Lord's Prayer: "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". The Devil even tried to tempt Christ. Christ was not in need of deliverance because he was able to ignore the pride of life, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye – the latter tempting the soul to the sin of acquisitiveness, pleasure and delight.[1] After Adam, humanity was bound to be easy prey for temptation (almost) willingly falling into sin. In that sense, temptation is vertiginous.[2]

In this contribution I would like to reflect beyond the alleged dichotomy of temptation and conversion, and to explore the possibility of temptation as a (euphoric) incentive for conversion, however. I will frequently refer to a book by the semiotician Massimo Leone on conversion as a (religious) crisis of identity.[3] Leone identifies the destabilization of a person as the first step of conversion. The religious identity of a person is destabilized by an encounter

1 M. O'Rourke Boyle, *Loyola's Acts. The Rhetoric of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 82.

2 I borrow the idea of vertigo from Eelco Runia. He introduced vertigo in the context of the (dis-)continuity in history. 'Vertigo may feel like a fear of falling, but really it is a wish to jump, covered by a fear of falling. Vertigo predisposes, as psychoanalysts say, to 'counterphobic' behavior. Giving in to vertigo is a strategy for escaping from an unbearable tension by doing something—by breaking apart from what one used to cherish, by eating the apple, by committing an 'original sin'. E. Runia, "Into Cleanness Leaping. The Vertiginous Urge to Commit History", *History and Theory* 49 (2010) 1, 1–20. Quote is on p. 1.

3 M. Leone, *Religious Conversion and Identity. The Semiotic Analysis of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2003). Leone defines the structure of conversion as: destabilization of the self, crisis, re-stabilization of the self. This model is a representation of the experience of conversion. In what

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with a spiritual message that speaks a different language, or in the very least takes a different tone. What is important is that the spiritual message is critical with regard to choices made and convictions held. The moment of destabilization causes a crisis: a disintegration of the coherent structure of beliefs. The crisis provokes a process of re-stabilization of the self, when the person searches for means to reorganize and build a new identity under the aegis of the spiritual message. However unique and overwhelming the personal experience of conversion may be, as a process, conversion has its own logic and persuasiveness, comparable with the function of the rhetorical concept of *ductus* (see below). These structural elements of logic and persuasiveness are, as it were, inherent to conversion, and as such inherited by representations of conversion, be it a personal memory of the experience, the *vita* recording the life of the saint or, as we shall see, the architecture of the *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale*.

My point is that, as a structure, the temptation of the soul is similar to the destabilization of the soul caused by the spiritual message during conversion. I will take the spiritual autobiography of Gregory the Great as my lead. Lacking any personal experience, his conversion is the one I am most familiar with.[4] It is a conversion under the patronage of Saint Andrew, older brother of the Prince of the Apostles and missionary (and patron saint of Constantinople).[5] The Gregorian conversion seemed to offer the best framework during a visit to the *Sant'Andrea*. This beautiful baroque church of Gian Lorenzo Bernini is the purpose-built church for the novitiate of the Jesuit Order.[6] Its architecture and iconography (and the adjacent novitiate buildings) are intended to support the purpose of the novitiate: teaching and guiding the novices and preparing them for their active apostolate in the world. The church was built as a place not only

follows, I will add to this basis model, the model of conversion as narrative structure (*intus*, *visio*, *foris*).

4 A. Smeets, *Conversio: Bekering en missionering bij Gregorius de Grote. Een semiotiek van het verleden* [*Conversio*. Conversion and Mission in Gregory the Great. A Semiotics of the Past] (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2007). On Gregory's conversion and spirituality see also C. Dagens, *Saint Grégoire le Grand: Culture et expérience chrétiennes* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1977) and C. Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

5 B. Müller, *Führung im Denken und Handeln Gregors des Grossen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 31–65, on the patronage of Saint Andrew and Gregory's active apostolate.

6 On the history of the location and iconography of church and buildings of *Sant'Andrea* see J. Terhalle, *S. Andrea al Quirinale von Gian Lorenzo Bernini in Rom: Von den Anfängen bis zur Grundsteinlegung* (Weimar: Verlag und Databank für Geisteswissenschaften, 2011) and G.A. Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque: Jesuit Art in Rome, 1565–1610* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 36–44.

to pray and hear Mass, but also as a *locus* to strengthen the novice's calling, and guide him during his process of conversion.

I will begin the next section with a sketch of Gregory's authentic experience of conversion: he was transformed by his conversion, and his struggle between an intense longing for contemplation (*intus*) and his deeply felt responsibilities for the world (*foris*) resolved itself in a new religious posture of being in the world: not as being 'of' the world, chained to its riches and bound by vainglory, but as being 'in' the world and 'with' God. In describing Gregory's experience, I will use the structure of destabilization, crisis and re-stabilization (Leone). The second half of the next section deals with the way in which conversion as experience evolved into a (narrative) structure to live by and to follow. The shift from personal experience to a basic structure for the Christian life (the model *intus*, *visio*, *foris*) bestowed the unique gift of conversion with the permanence of divine calling and the faithful's *imitatio Christi*. In this sense, conversion became something absolute: both a voluntary gift of grace and an imperative divine calling. Gregory's spirituality of conversion was *de facto* about something inevitable: a mission and ministry of conversion. In section three, I will explore this in greater detail: once evolved into a ministry or mission of conversion, the experienced event transcended into an autonomous process, a divine event. Conversion generated a temptation which could not be ignored. In section four, I will report on my visit to the church of St. Andrew, where I tested the hypothesis.

2 A Gregorian Conversion

Most of what we know about the conversion of Gregory the Great is derived from a letter containing a unique fragment telling us about Gregory's spiritual autobiography.[7] It is a letter of dedication, addressed to Leander of Seville, accompanying a copy of Gregory's famous commentary on the Book of Job, the *Moralia in Iob*, which he had promised to Leander.[8] The project started out as

7 On Gregory's biography, J.R.C. Martyn, *The Letters of Gregory the Great* (Toronto: PIMS, 2004), 1–18 and for instance R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3–14.

8 M. Adriaen (ed.), *Sancti Gregorii Magni: Moralia in Iob* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), CCSL 143–143A. A recent study is from K. Greschat, *Die* Moralia in Iob *Gregor des Grossen. Ein christologisch-ekklesiologischer Kommentar* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). Leander of Seville, stern defender of the Catholic faith, was in Constantinople to seek support for his case against the Arianism of the Visigothic kings in his native Spain. In the same period, Gregory the Great was stationed there as *apocrisiarius* (papal legate or ambassador). They

a series of lectures for an audience consisting of monks who had travelled with Gregory from Rome, Leander, and a group of interested court officials and pious ladies.

In the letter dated July 595, Gregory recalled how his friend Leander was involved from the very start in the effort to explain the deeper meaning and significance of this 'dark' book (*obscuro hoc opere*) of Job.[9] In the first two sections of the letter, Gregory reminded Leander of all he had told his friend in confidence about his longing for and struggle with conversion.[10]

> I exposed to your ears everything that I disliked about myself, since I had put off the grace of conversion for a long time, and to a great extent, and even after I was inflamed by a love of Heaven, I thought it better to wear secular clothing. For what I was seeking concerning the love of eternity was already being revealed to me, but an ingrained habit had prevented me from changing my external attire. And when my mind was still forcing me to serve the present world, as it were superficially, then many things began to build up against me from the same worldly concern, so that I was held back in the now, not by its outward show now but, which is more serious, by my thoughts. But finally I fled anxiously from all of this, and looked for the haven of the monastery, leaving behind what belonged to the world, as I then mistakenly thought. From the shipwreck of this life, I came out naked. For as a wave, once a storm has built up, often shakes a carelessly tethered boat even from off a bay on the safest of shores, so I suddenly found myself in an ocean of secular affairs, under the pretext of ecclesiastical rank. As for the peace of the monastery, it was only when I lost it that I realized how tightly it should have been held.[11]

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were to become good and trusted friends. On Leander, see Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 164–167.

9 *Mor. epistola*, CCSL 143, 1–4; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 379–385 (quote on p. 380).

10 I analyzed the letter *Ad Leandrum* as source for Gregory's conversion in my dissertation. Here I follow the argument made in that study. Smeets, *Conversio*, 67–185.

11 (O)mne in tuis auribus, quod mihi de me displicebat, exposui: quoniam diu longeque conuersionis gratiam distuli, et postquam coelesti sum desiderio afflatus saeculari habitu contegi melius putaui. Aperiebatur enim mihi iam de aeternitatis amore quid quaererem, sed inolita me consuetudo deuinxerat, ne exteriorem cultum mutarem. Cumque adhuc me cogeret animus praesenti mundo quasi specie tenus deseruire, coeperunt multa contra me ex eiusdem mundi cura succrescere, ut in eo iam non specie, sed, quod est grauius, mente retinerer. Quae tandem cuncta sollicite fugiens, portum monasterii petii, et relictis quae mundi sunt, ut frustra tunc credidi, ex huius uitae naufragio nudus euasi. Quia enim plerumque nauem incaute religatam, etiam de sinu tutissimi littoris unda excutit, cum

To come to grips with Gregory's spiritual quest, we will follow the chronology of the story as he tells it. When exactly his *historia conversionis* started remains unclear. But in the years of his political career, the period he told Leander about, it had already begun. He struggled with an inner conflict between the active life in the world and the contemplative life of prayer. Eventually, after a crisis during which the world not only had a firm physical grip on him but also on his mind, he decided to flee into a monastery. He chose not just any monastery, but the monastery under the patronage of Saint Andrew, which the saint himself had founded in his ancestral home on the Caelian Hill (the place now marked by the *San Gregorio Magno*). This crisis and his decision to change his way of life and to become a monk, can be dated to 576.

Reading Gregory's words, one can easily imagine what was at stake: his yearning for a contemplative life was increasingly hard to reconcile with his daily life in and his (heartfelt) responsibilities for the world. On a more personal level, the tension manifested itself as a conflict between Gregory's *persona* (the public figure, the individual) and his soul (his most private self, the inner core of his individuality). While the former held him back, chaining him to the worldly and the mundane, the latter pined for the silent contemplation of God. At first he attempted to rationalize the inner conflict: initially he thought he preferred a political career, later he thought he only served the world superficially. But eventually, Gregory felt forced to turn away from the world. He sought refuge in the safe haven of the monastery and left the world for a life free of responsibilities, where he would be free to pray and contemplate God's Word.

But, this almost idyllic situation of a life dedicated to *lectio divina* did not last.[12] The "pretext of ecclesiastical rank" refers to his ordination as a deacon. This, and his subsequent appointment as papal legate (between 579–585) ran counter to his earlier conversion. In Constantinople he felt like being in the middle of a storm. He found himself preoccupied by diplomatic affairs and the wheeling and dealing of politics. His only comfort was that he shared in the communal life of prayer of the monks who travelled with him from Saint

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tempestas excrescit, repente me, sub praetextu ecclesiastici ordinis, in causarum saecularium pelago reperi; et quietem monasterii, quia habendo non fortiter tenui, quam stricte tenenda fuerit, perdendo cognoui. *Mor. epistola* CCSL 143, 1; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 379.

12 The 'almost' is not insignificant. Barbara Müller considers the spirituality practiced in Saint Andrew's as a think tank for church-political reform. Müller, *Führung im Denken und Handeln*, 39. Right from the start, Gregory's contemplation is linked with a specific active apostolate.

Andrew's. He saw God's hand in that arrangement.[13] Against this backdrop, Gregory quite candidly shared his hopes, fears and failures with Leander. In response to this confession, Leander urged the group of monks to ask Gregory for a commentary on the book of Job (an example of spiritual guidance, one might say). To balance his duties, Gregory would not only share the communal life of prayer but also involve himself actively in the monastic *lectio divina* he missed so dearly. Yet, it all started to feel an almost unbearable burden, leading to the following words:[14]

> Soon, facing this obscure work, never yet discussed before me, I realized that I was dealing with really great matters of an extraordinary nature, but I was overcome just by the heaviness of the discourse, I admit, and being tired out, I gave in. But suddenly, caught between fear and devotion, when I raised my mind's eye to the bestower of gifts, I put aside hesitation and at once paid attention with certainty. For what my brethren had lovingly asked me to do, could not be impossible. Indeed, I despair of being suitable for it, but in my desperation I gained my strength and cast my hope on Him, through whom 'the tongues of the dumb are opened, and who makes the tongues of infants eloquent' (Wisd. 10:21), and who distinguished the irrational and brute braying of an ass from the rational modes of human speech. Why is it surprising, then, if He should offer intellect to a stupid human being. For He narrates his Truth, when He wants to, even through the mouth of dumb beasts. And so, provided with strength by this thought, I aroused my dryness to track down a really deep fountain. And although the life of those for whom I was being forced to give the exposition would long outlast my own, I still did not believe it wrongful if a fluent pipe of lead should serve the uses of mankind.[15]

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13 Quod diuina factum dispensatione conspicio, ut eorum semper exemplo ad orationis placidum littus, quasi anchorae fune restringerer, cum causarum saecularium incessabili impulsu fluctuarem. 'And I see that this was done according to divine dispensation, so that by their example, I might always be tethered to a placid shore of prayer, as with the rope of an anchor, when I was tossed to and fro under the incessant pressure of secular cases'. *Mor. epistola* CCSL 143, 1; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 380.

14 Gregory complains about the 'persistent request' for a commentary and open the mysteries of the book, the 'tiresome request' to add to the allegorical meaning the moral meaning of the text, and the 'even more burdensome' task to give evidence for his interpretations. *Mor. epistola* CCSL 143, 1; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 380.

15 Mox uero, ut in obscuro hoc opere, atque ante nos hactenus indiscusso, ad tanta me pertrahi ac talia cognoui, solo auditus pondere uictus, fateor, lassatusque succubui. Sed repente inter formidinem deuotionemque deprehensus, cum in largitorem munerum

For me, the moment of the inward gaze upwards signifies a second act of Gregory's conversion, following and completing the first act of becoming a monk. The definite and resolute decision to don the habit of a monk was the result of the tension between the polarity of the world (*foris*, the outside realm of action; a life controlled by troubles and responsibilities) *versus* that of the monastery (*intus*, the inner realm of contemplation; a life dedicated to God). The *foris/intus* antithesis is central to an understanding of how Gregory experienced this second moment of conversion: the 'outward' worries and hesitations are tamed by what he saw in the 'inward' gaze upwards. "*Oculos mentis attollerem*": the gaze of the mind's eye changed the horizontal movements that are apparent in the text. The movement of *pertrare* (being dragged to, translated by Martyn as 'facing') led to the dead end of Gregory 'giving in'.[16] Caught in the middle between fear (of the task) and devotion (to the monastic community) he turned inwards to gaze upwards at God with the eye of his mind. This broke the deadlock of horizontality, it made Gregory put his hesitation aside and strike a deep and hidden well of inspiration (*fontem tantae profunditatis*), introducing a sense of verticality that ended his standstill. Water streaming through a pipe of lead was a metaphor for the commentary he starts in the next sentence: "And so, gathering the same brethren before me, I soon read them the first sections of the book […]".[17]

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oculos mentis attollerem, cunctatione postposita, illico certus attendi, quia impossibile esse non poterat, quod de fraternis mihi cordibus caritas imperabat. Fore quippe idoneum me ad ista desperaui: sed ipsa mei desperatione robustior, ad illum spem protinus erexi, per quem aperta est lingua mutorum, qui linguas infantium facit disertas; qui immensos brutosque asinae ruditus, per sensatos humani colloquii distinxit modos. Quid igitur mirum, si intellectum stulto homini praebeat, qui ueritatem suam, cum voluerit, etiam per ora iumentorum narrat? Huius ergo robore considerationis accinctus, ariditatem meam ad indagandum fontem tantae profunditatis excitaui. Et quamuis eorum, quibus exponere compellebar, longe me uita transcenderet, iniuriosum tamen esse non credidi, si fluenta usibus hominum plumbi fistula ministraret. *Mor. epistola*, CCSL 143, 2–3; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 380–81.

16 *Mor. epistola*, CCSL 143, 2; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 380.

17 Unde mox eisdem coram positis fratribus, priora libri sub oculis dixi (…). *Mor. epistola* CCSL 143, 2; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 381. A little later, Gregory uses the metaphor of a meandering river as image for the exegete explaining God's words. On this Grover A. Zinn, Jr., 'Exegesis and Spirituality in the Writings of Gregory the Great' in J.C. Cavadini (ed.), *Gregory the Great: A Symposium* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 171–72.

3 The Structure of Gregory's Conversion

Gregory's first act of conversion, i.e. the choice for monastic life, turned out to be insufficient. One might say that he failed to secure his (spiritual) autonomy. His worldly commitments could not be overcome by the rationalization he had projected for himself, nor could the walls of the monastery protect him against it. In a double bind, autonomy revealed itself as utter heteronomy: first the world took hold of his mind, and later on his ordination obliged him into an obedience that forced him to accept the burden of becoming a papal ambassador.

The second act of his conversion circled around Gregory's escape from this capture. The inner gaze upwards introduced a verticality, which loosened the restraints of the burdens and duties of the world, and it put them in a (freeing) mental or spiritual perspective. Expressing his faith in God (as one of the faithful) gave him new energy, for now he saw (with the eyes of the mind) that "what my brethren had lovingly asked me to do could not be impossible".[18] Gregory came to understand that God's grace was the defining factor of a life in faith, rather than his longing and his efforts. His expertise in the monastic tradition of *lectio divina* taught him that God's grace could be read in Scripture, seen in the world and experienced in life – if one allowed the mind's eye to see it.[19]

For Gregory, seeing divine grace was equal to longing for it. The experience destabilized his personal identity and ignited Gregory's *historia conversionis*. The confrontation of this (new) longing with his 'ingrained habit' (*inolita me consuetudo*) made him ponder his choices,[20] and eventually caused a crisis which he tried to overcome by rationalizing his commitment to the world. Instead of taking it as a guide and accepting the work of God's grace, he had tried to rescue himself by fleeing into the monastic haven. In the end, his attempts at a re-stabilization of the self faltered and another crisis emerged when inner peace was increasingly perturbed by the impertinent requests of the monks. This time, Gregory chose to reflect rather than act on the situation and through his inward reflection experienced the re-stabilization of the self: new certainty, based on a spiritual seeing and a deeper understanding of God and the world, was reached.

18 *Mor. epistola*, CCSL 143, 3; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 381.

19 On Gregory's expertise on *lectio diuina* see for instance Müller, *Führung in Denken und Handeln*, 55–62.

20 *Mor. epistola*, CCSL 143, 1; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 379.

The stability of the soul was never secure, the crisis never completely tamed. The problem lay not just in man's carnal weakness but also, and possibly even more so, in God's constant call to conversion, ceaselessly appealing to the soul of the faithful to lovingly participate in the history of Salvation. The inward and outward impulses, the tension between body and soul, the struggle between the needs of and responsibility for the world and the longing for prayer and contemplation, in short, the struggle for conversion turned out to be a permanent one and became central to his calling – as an *imitatio Christi*.

This basic scheme of Gregory's experience including destabilization, crisis and re-stabilization evolved into a more abstract notion of conversion. Conversion was to become the core element of Gregorian spirituality and filtered through in his spiritual teaching and guidance. Gradually, it became the basic model for Christian life, transcending mere personal experience and introducing a continuing struggle to free oneself from the world. The convert was expected to focus on the inner realm of divine Truth and Light, rather than the outer darkness of human reality. This contemplative turn inward (*intus*) was in fact a turn towards the realm of the spiritual and thus towards God: there one sees with the 'eyes of the mind' (*visio*) and is led, as it were, beyond the mere appearance of the things seen in the world. Such 'seeing' of God's word, understanding its deeper meaning and intention, reveals to the eye that the human world and history as a realm are enveloped by the unfolding history of Salvation. In contemplation, Gregory learned to trust God's words and be moved by them. Scripture was "the light of our journey in the darkness of this present life".[21] The disclosure of truth and light prompted the impulse outward (*foris*), as for Gregory it was clear that Scripture urges the soul back into the world: "God speaks to us through the whole of Scripture solely in order to attract us to the love of Him and our neighbour".[22]

21 (I)n tenebris uitae praesentis facta est lumen itineris. See M. Adriaen (ed.), *Sancti Gregorii Magni homiliae in Hiezechihelem prophetam* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), CCSL 142, 93; *Hom. Ez.* 1.7.17 is quoted in Dagens, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*, 58.

22 (Q)uia ad hoc solum Deus per totam nobis sacram Scripturam loquitur, ut nos ad suum et proximi amorem trahat. CCSL 142, 221; *Hom. Ez.* 1.10.14 is quoted in P. Vandevelde, "Diuina eloquia cum legente crescent: Does Gregory the Great Mean a Subjective or an Objective Growth?", *Rivista di storia della filosofia* (2003), 615–616.

4 Conversion by Temptation

Gregory felt compelled to give his wholehearted attention to God's calling. After all: who could resist God?[23] One might say that both in his spiritual life and spiritual guidance, Gregory was oriented towards theonomy. He could not desist from preaching, nor could he desist from meditating on God's words and contemplating their significance and intentionality.[24] Conversion became a mission in itself.[25] Such a mission holds certain risks, and Gregory considered the whole of Christian life to be a sacrifice.[26] Whereas traditionally, sacrifice was seen in terms of withdrawal from the world, warding off all carnal pleasures, Gregorian spirituality revealed that a more profound sacrifice implied leaving the realm of contemplation and returning to the world with its temptations.[27] In the Gregorian approach the soul was to take an active risk of destabilization by opening one's eyes to the divine reality behind reality (at once embracing, carrying, and guiding the reality of human life and history) while stepping back into the world of temptations. In this movement of self-temptation, it ventured to reverse the fall towards sin by a salutary vertigo.

This vertiginous longing is key to the Gregorian model of conversion and is experienced as a gift of grace which overwhelms humanity. It is not an autonomous choice. It is also a metaphor, referring both to Gregory's personal experience of conversion, and to the monastic *lectio divina*: although the monk

23 Quoting Job 9:4 'He is wise in heart and mighty in strength—who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded?' (English Standard Edition). The verse was part of Gregory's commentary on Job. Quis resistit ei et pace habuit? (…) Quae enim subiecta Deo in tranquillitate persisterent, ipsa se sibimet dimissa confundunt, quia in se pacem non inueniunt, cui uenienti desuper in auctore contradicunt. '*Who hath resisted Him, and had peace?* (…) For whatsoever things if subjected to God might have continued at peace, being left to themselves by their own act work their own confusion, in that they do not find in themselves that peace, which coming from above they contend against in the Creator'. *Mor*. 9.5.5 CCSL 143, 458; English translation *Moralia in Job: Morals on the Book of Job by Saint Gregory the Great. The First Pope of that Name. Translated with Notes Vol. I-III* (Ex Fontibus Company, 2012). Vol. I, 458.

24 C. Leyser, "Let me speak, let me speak'. Vulnerability and Authority in Gregory's Homilies on Ezekiel", *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo*. Vol. II (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1991), 169–182.

25 Dagens, *Saint Grégoire le Grand*, 311–344, on the ministry of conversion (mission, reform of the Church), with this closing remark: 'Le temps de l'Église est le temps de la conversion du monde, parce c'est aussi le temps de la prédication et que la prédication prépare les hommes au retour du Christ'.

26 Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 187.

27 Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 188–191.

is reading (actively), his understanding of God's words is not gained, but rather received. It was Scripture that took the initiative, as if God spoke to the reading and contemplating monk.[28] Reading Scripture involved the soul in the transcendental reality of the history of Salvation. It unfolded itself before the soul's very eyes, as a sacramental construction.[29] Dwelling within the realm of this construction and 'seeing' the significance and intention of God's words helped frame the soul's conversion, when these very words guided and changed its ethical framework.[30] God's promise of Redemption acted as the ultimate euphoric temptation. The soul eventually longs to leap into the temptation of conversion.

Of course, Gregory would consider this to be yet another act of divine grace. Seen from another perspective, his preaching and spiritual leadership is an outstanding example of the rhetorical concept of *ductus*. *Ductus* (derived from the Latin verb *ducere*: to leading or to guide) is an autonomous movement (*conductus*) within and through a discourse's various parts (be it a sermon, a church, or any other manifestation) that evokes an attitude of good will and trust, through which the recipient is tuned into the work's message or intentionality (*intentio*).[31] It is worthwhile to apply this category to the analysis of conversion.

When conversion is preached, what is put into play is a representation of conversion. Conversion, regarded as a narrative structure (based on the model of conversion *intus*, *visio*, *foris*), constitutes a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. It holds the dynamics of convincing its audience through persuasiveness. The very structure is oriented toward seduction and guides the

28 In a letter written in June 595 to Theodore (the emperor's physician), Gregory poses the rhetorical question: Quid autem est scriptura sacra nisi quaedam epistula omnipotentis Dei ad creaturam suam? 'But what is Holy Scripture other than a letter of almighty God to his creation?', *Ep*. 5.46, D. Norberg (ed), *S. Gregorii Magnum. Registrum Epistularum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982) CCSL 140, 339; ET Martyn, *The Letters*, 373.

29 Zinn, "Exegesis and Spirituality", 172.

30 Vandevelde, "Does Gregory the Great Mean a Subjective or an Objective Growth?", 628 especially note 56.

31 M. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), page 77 on *ductus* and pages 14–16 on *intentio*. I introduced the concept of 'intentionality' as the orientation of a certain utterance, inviting, guiding, educating the participants of the utterance by its very manifestation towards a realization of what the utterance meant to signify (projection); in the given example: the fulfilment of the history of Salvation. In Arnold Smeets, *Conversio*, 39–44. See also Mary Carruthers, "The concept of *ductus*. Or journeying through a work of art", M. Carruthers (ed.), *Rhetoric Beyond Words. Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 190–213.

audience through the story, convincing them of its truth. This overlaps well with the Gregorian approach of conversion. Gregory the Great was convinced that it was God who provided the miracle and that God was guiding his spiritual journey – for a preacher may "deliver words to the ears, but he cannot open hearts".[32] Not he, but the communicated representation of conversion itself, was leading the soul into the temptation of conversion.

5 The *Ductus* of Imagery

At this juncture, it is time to take the test, based on the findings portrayed above. So I turn to the sixteenth century, where since 1565, the *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale* has been a location for the novitiate of the Jesuit Order.[33] A lot of time, thought, means and care were invested in embellishing the church and buildings of the Novitiate. It is known that the buildings of the Novitiate were decorated for a specific reason. In 1608 Claudio Aquaviva (the fifth Superior

32 Sagittae quippe Dei pertranseunt quando uerba praedicationis eius ab auribus ad corda descendunt. Quod (quia) solo diuino munere agitur (…). 'For the arrows of God pass through, when the words of His preaching descend from the ears to the hearts. And (…) this is effected sole by divine grace (…)'. *Mor*. 29.23.47 CCSL 143B, 1465–1466; ET *Moralia in Job*, Vol III, 311. Quoted in Straw, *Perfection in Imperfection*, 204. Her translation.

33 For this and the following on the history of the complex: Terhalle, *S. Andrea al Quirinale* and Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque*, 36–44. Richeôme stood in a longer tradition, which appreciated images as devotional tools for contemplation and spiritual growth. The Council of Trent took a firm stand, and Ignatius's *Exercitia spiritualia* proved to be an important stimulus. The sensuality of for instance the art of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the architect of the *Sant'Andrea*, seems to at least share the ideas and argumentation developed in the *Exercitia.* For this Baily, *Between Renaissance and Baroque*, 7–9. Traditionally words were preferred above images. Images were adulterous and adored. Reading was another matter. The act of *lectio* was not a sensual or corporal but a mental act. Words were read as signs, bearing transcendental significance. Gregory the Great is an authority who considered both images and words signs of the world signs 'enveloping the faithful in a counter-*mundus*'. See Peter Brown, "Images as a substitute for writing", Evangelos Chrysos, Ian Wood (eds.), *East and West: Modes of Communication* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 15–34, the quote is from page 32. Gregory wrote two letters on the subject of images to Serenus of Marseilles: *Ep*. 9.209 (CCSL 140A, 768) and *Ep*. 11.10 (CCSL 140A, 873–76). On this Cecila Chazelle, "Pictures, books, and the illiterate. Gregory I's letters to Serenus of Marseilles", *Word and Image* 6(1990), 138–153, H.L. Kessler, "Pictural Narrative and Church Mission in Sixth-Century Gaul", H.L. Kessler, M. Shreve Simpson (eds.), *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1985), 75–91, and briefly A. Smeets, "De noodzaak van authenticiteit in een wereld vol beelden en media", A. Berlis, P. de Haan (eds.), *Met passie en precisie* (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2010), 35–37.

General of the Jesuit Society), invited the French Jesuit Louis Richeôme to Rome to compile a new handbook for the novices, helping them on their spiritual journey, based on the paintings in the buildings of the Novitiate at *Sant'Andrea*. Richeôme was well equipped for the job. He was convinced of the didactic power of art: "Painting is more suitable to an ordinary person (…) because he is moved by the senses rather than the spirit, and would not see the profiles and colours of a well-woven argument as well as the lines and features of an image".[34] His work, entitled *La peinture spirituelle*, remains the only source on the paintings.[35] The grand Bernini church for the Novitiate is still there, however, and it is open to visitors.

While visiting Rome, in May 2015, I walked up the Quirinal Hill from the *Via XXIV Maggio.* Opposite the presidential palace, to the right, a few steps lead from the street to the entrance of the Novitiate, or rather: the church, which linked the outside world with the buildings of the Novitiate. I entered the church from the right. Closing the door, a crucifix, positioned in a niche just left of the high altar caught my attention. It turned out to be a perfect parallel to the entrance to the Novitiate proper, to the right of the high altar.

The church is oval in shape and runs parallel to the street. On the right-hand side, we find a niche with a confessional, the chapel of Saint Francis Xavier and the chapel of the Passion. To the left: a second confessional, followed by chapels devoted to Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Stanislaus Kostka. Directly opposite the entrance of the church is the high altar. On either side, completing the circle, one detects the aforementioned crucifix and the niche functioning as corridor to the Novitiate buildings. In the nave, the chapel of the founder of the order is facing that of Francis Xavier, the saintly initiator of the Jesuit missions (envisioning an important aspect of the active apostolate of the order). A step further away from the entrance, closer to the high altar, Stanislaus Kostka is facing the Chapel of the Passion, fittingly. Generations of (the intended) inhabitants, identified themselves with him. Age 17, Kostka became a novice at *Sant'Andrea* in 1567, but he died within a year. Witnesses later testified that he had foreseen his own death on the feast of Saint Lawrence. Familiarity with this story does help to appreciate the painting. His fellow novices would soon consider him a saint. All were young, and all worked and prayed their way

34 Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque*, 49. See also F. Haskell, "The Role of Patrons. Baroque Style Changes", Rudolf Wittkower, I.B. Jaffe (eds.), *Baroque Art: The Jesuit Contribution* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972), 55.

35 Bailey, *Between Renaissance and Baroque*, 48–52 passim; Terhalle, *S. Andrea al Quirinale*, 182–185.

to ordination and mission. His cult would spread fast and far, leading to his official canonization in 1726.[36]

Apart from the rows of chairs, there is nothing to stop the visitor from roaming around and taking it all in. As one walks around the nave, it is fascinating to choose different positions to view the space or study the paintings. The circle of chapels feels like a kind of embrace: warm colours, fine marble; the niches of the chapels marked by screens, bathing in a gentle light. There are but two restrictions to the contemporary visitor: the first is the *limes* between nave and high altar, the latter being reserved for ordained priests. The second is the entrance fee, required to visit the Novitiate buildings.[37]

In the past, novices would enter their church from that direction: this meant that the chapel of the Passion (a sign of fate and testing) was on their left, and more or less in front of them they would observe Saint Ignatius's chapel (a sign of inspiration and perseverance), and on their right the novices would see the main altar (a sign of purpose and support). In the corridor to the Novitiate, I noticed a small passage to the altar, between the outer wall and the pillar. Also, on the left of the main altar, one could walk behind a pillar into the niche with the crucifix. The niche, the corridor to the Novitiate, and the main altar were all connected, yet only ordained priests were granted access, making clear that this privileged space marked the end of the novitiate.

The decorations throughout the Noviciate were there to guide the life of the novices, both in the rooms of the buildings where they studied, worked and slept, and in this sacred space, where the novices prayed and attended Mass. Once in the church, the novices were safely sheltered in the nave. Around them (almost as if embracing them) were the chapels of the Passion, the two most important figure-heads of their order and the saint-protector of the novitiate. All were meant to inspire and strengthen the novices' calling. This calling became visible in the sacred space of the high altar, where priests celebrated the mystery of the Eucharist under the saintly protection of the apostle Andrew, whose martyrdom was the subject of the altarpiece. Just to the left of it, the crucifix invited one to personal prayer. On the right is the entrance to the buildings where the novices studied to become priests themselves.

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36 Terhalle, *S. Andrea al Quirinale*, 93–119.

37 After paying a small fee, one can visit the sacristy and the room were Stanislaus Kostka died. I mentioned the statue of him on his deathbed made by Pierre Le Gros. There is a closed door behind glass, displayed as if it is relic. It might be an addition to the motive of the gate (novitiate as gateway to the priesthood). Perhaps it is a motive in its own right: I also came across doors behind glass, marking the passage of illustrious Jesuits, in the *Collegio Romano*.

As if it was a manifestation of the trajectory of the novitiate, all the curving perspectives from the nave of the church, seem to merge in the high altar. The centre of this (more or less oval) recess of the high altar is formed by the scene of Saint Andrew in agony on his cross by Il Borgonogne. The novices are reminded that the patron saint of their church died on the cross. That is not a happy ending, but then again, it is not really the end. The saint's gaze is directed upwards, and the gilt stucco angels from above frame the altarpiece, shining in the light from the altar's own oculus. Just before one can envision the death of Saint Andrew (the statue captures him in the moments before his death; significantly, the statue is positioned in the recess of the high altar, accessible only to priests), the gaze of the beholder in the nave follows Saint Andrew's to the hidden source of light, and from there upwards to the dome of the church. There, just above the boundary between high altar and nave, is a colossal figure of the patron saint. Sitting on clouds, his arms spread, he is ascending to heaven – angels seem to welcome him from the cupola, bathing in the light coming from above, shining on both saint and onlooker. This is where the narrative ends. It is remarkable how our attention is guided towards the vertically oriented second half of the Church's iconography: from the mystery of Saint Andrew's martyrdom to the transcendental reward of grace and light from heaven, a light which gives Saint Andrew's face the impression of ecstasy. Seeing this ecstasy, really seeing it, and envisioning it with the eyes of one's mind, the light from above could cause the very same ecstasy in one's soul and heart. Who would be willing to resist that perspective?[38]

Of course, modern visitors are not the intended audience of the paintings, stucco and marble. Nevertheless these works of art still tell their stories about beauty, colour, harmony, passion, strength, convictions, mission and grace. There are several aspects to dazzle the visitor: the sharp contrast between the bright sun outside and the filtered light inside the church, the beauty of its architecture, the focused walk around the nave, watching the art, trying to discern the details of the paintings, and the gaze upwards, craning your neck, slowly following the curve of the dome, right up to the centre of the copula. The altarpieces and the crucifix tell a story supporting the education of the novices. The centre of attention, the high altar, marks the place where this horizontality curves into the verticality of a programme of inspiration and passion, enforcing the vocation and calling of the novices. The *Sant'Andrea* is about conversion, preparing and inspiring its intended audience to a dedicated life committed to an active apostolate.

38 C. Avery, *Bernini: Genius of the Baroque* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 119–121; R. Wittkover, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini: The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque* (London: The Phaidon Press, 1955), 31–32.

6 Conclusion

To conclude with a more personal reflection, I admit that when in Rome, I sometimes feel I am more susceptible to the phenomenon of conversion, even though I do not actually expect to be converted. It could be in the air, but it is much more likely that the Eternal City's art and history have its effect on my experience. There is a logic and persuasiveness inherent in the world of sacred imagery, be they written, built, carved or painted. Precisely here my reflections on the bond between temptation and conversion help me to see, and really see (*visio*), all the while being aware of the fact that one never sees all there is to be envisioned. Against the backdrop of Gregorian spirituality one may be triggered, inspired, tempted by works of art. In this light, the *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale* discloses clear intentions to tempt one into the narrative structure of conversion and feel embraced by it. At least as long as the gaze is held, it frames, moves, and colours my impressions and emotions.

I visited this Jesuit church twice. The second time around, there were a few tourists walking around the church, silently looking at the paintings and the architecture. I remember observing them. A family of four, the children listening attentively to their mother's whispered explanations and looking at everything she pointed out to them, and some students – of art perhaps? The youngsters would have been more or less the same age as the novices of earlier ages. Although we all saw the same building and I could see in some of the student's drawings that they were actually quite focused, I could not imagine that they experienced the same as those seventeenth century novices. Unless of course, the impact of the discourse of conversion, as told by the iconography and architecture of the *Sant'Andrea*, operates like the mustard seed of the Gospels. In that case, the beauty of the *Sant'Andrea*, even for accidental visitors today, remains a patient and polite temptation into conversion.

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CHAPTER 8

"I Have Wounded My Soul with the Instrument of Salvation": The Threefold Spiritual Development of Gerard Manley Hopkins S.J.

Joep van Gennip

1 Introduction

In this chapter I will focus on the threefold spiritual development of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889).[1] These three 'stages' were his conversion as a member of the Church of England to Rome in 1866, his decision to enter the Society of Jesus two years later, and the transformation of his poems (nature sonnets) under the influence of Scotus's philosophy and the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, roughly from 1868 onwards. As we will see, at all these stages the highly sensitive Hopkins was struggling with conflicting ideas which he held so high: his opinion on the inseparability of art and religion, his asceticism and disciplining of the senses versus his admiration of nature's beauty as a means to praise God, and his poetry as a way of expressing his deepest religious feelings. One should not make the mistake of interpreting these 'stages' of conversion, or shifting religious mindsets, as isolated events in his life in a strict chronology. Hopkins's religious and artistic ideas never stopped developing, as one can see in his diaries, notes and correspondence.

Almost every aspect of Hopkins's life has been studied and reflected on by scholars all over the world.[2] Although his poetic talent was only recognized years after his death with the publication in 1918 of his *Poems* by his friend Robert Bridges, the debate about his status as a modernist and his poetical heritage (sprung rhythm or metrical experiments, inscapes, metaphysical lan-

1 The quote in the title of this chapter is derived from Hopkins's letter to rev. E.W. Urquhart, 13 June 1868. R.K.R. Thornton, C. Phillips (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. 1: Correspondence 1852–1881* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 179–181, at 181.

2 Recently: A. Easson, *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Routledge 2011); D. Sobolev, *The Split World of Gerard Manley Hopkins: An Essay in Semiotic Phenomenology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011); J.J. Feeney, *The Playfulness of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); P. Mariani, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life* (New York: Viking Press, 2008); J. Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism. A Heart in Hiding* (New York/London: Routledge, 2003).

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guage, etc.) still continues.[3] This paper will focus only on the different types of religious conversions he went through. It will also take some of his poems and diary-notes into account insofar as they provide an insight into these processes.

2 "When It Came It Was All in a Minute": Hopkins's First Conversion

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born in Stratford in the county of Essex on 28 July 1844. He was brought up in a typical middle-class Anglican family. His parents, Manley Hopkins and Kate Smith, were artistically gifted. His father, by profession an insurance agent, was an autodidact, teaching himself French, Latin, Greek and church history in his spare time. As a consequence of the industrialization and overpopulation of Stratford, which had become an outskirt of London, the family decided to move to Hampstead, where the eight year old Hopkins was placed in a day school. A couple of years later he became a boarder at Highgate Grammar School. In these years, 1854–1862, we find a first glimpse of his sympathy for Catholicism.

On his thirteenth birthday he received a book of John Henry Parker, called *An Introduction to the Study of Gothic Architecture* (1849). In this study the author reveals an aesthetic vision on the Gothic Revival, relating it to the time of the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church: the Middle Ages.[4] In the nineteenth century, this vision became highly popular among the Catholic elite as it constructed a political, social and aesthetic system in which Rome could once more prevail. According to Hopkins's biographer Norman White, Parker's publication had a profound impact on the young man.[5] His Highgate school-prize poem *The Escorial* (1860) combined this view on Catholic architecture with Hopkins's rather strange interest in austerity and martyrdom. Some stories survive from his days at Highgate in which he is characterized as someone who was preoccupied with vocation, abstinence and ascesis. This

3 Cf. F. Fordham, *I Do I Undo I Redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce, and Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); J.I. Wimsatt, *Hopkins's Poetics of Speech Sound: Sprung Rhythm, Lettering, Inscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Edward A. Stephenson, *What Sprung Rhythm Really Is* (Ontario: International Hopkins Association, 1987); P. Milward, *Landscape and Inscape: Vision and Inspiration in Hopkins's Poetry* (London: Elek Books Ltd., 1975).

4 By the end of the nineteenth century this neo-Gothic style was firmly established as the predominant 'Catholic style' in the Netherlands, whereas in England the gothic style was also related to the Anglican (High) Church.

5 N. White, *Hopkins: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1992), 21–22.

dualism between the body and the soul and his quest to master his senses for a higher 'purpose' directed him for the first time to the Catholic Church. A couple of years later, in 1866, just before his conversion, he sublimated this ascetic tendency in a poem called *The Habit of Perfection.* In his youth however his contacts with Catholics and their customs were non-existent, so he had to imagine his own romantic and ideal Catholic world. His boarding school and its headmaster John Bradley Dyne were indifferent to Catholicism as well as to the growing popularity of Tractarianism. The latter group, also called the Oxford Movement, derived its name from the 'Tracts for The Times', written from 1833 onwards. The Tractarians symbolized the neo-Catholic High Church party of the Anglican establishment. Just like the Roman Catholic Church they had a penchant for religious rituals, and were therefore often sarcastically called 'ritualists' by their opponents. Religious penance and self-flagellation was also not uncommon among their members. This movement, which had a dramatic influence on Hopkins's Oxford years, had a medieval vision on Victorian society and found its aesthetic counterpart in John Ruskin, the leading English art critic, and the Pre-Raphaelites established in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

In April 1863 the then nineteen year old Hopkins went up to Oxford to read Classics. He had won an exhibition at Balliol College, at the time a stronghold of liberalism and rationalism and so the very opposite of the Tractarian movement.[6] Benjamin Jowett, Regius Professor of Greek and the great translator of Plato's *Dialogues*, became Hopkins's tutor. In this period, Jowett was widely known as the head of the liberal and scientific-utilitarian camp, commonly called the Broad Church Party. In Hopkins' Oxford years the 'Tractarian Wars' once more intensified and entered their third and final stage, leaving the Tractarians defeated in the 1860s.[7] The two camps were well-organized, with Jowett and the members of Balliol in the one, and Doctor Edward Bouverie Pusey and Canon Harry Parry Liddon with their Tractarian headquarters at Christ Church forming the other. The debate focused, among many other things, on the *Essays and Reviews*, published in 1860, "a collection of seven

6 "Rationalism is the very logical development of the principles of Protestantism whereby 'human reason' is set up as the sole source and test of all truth. Cardinal Newman defined it in terms of 'liberalism'". See John Pick, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966[2]), 10.

7 The preceding phases in the Tractarian Wars were 1833–1841, ending with the exile of Newman from Oxford, and 1842–1859, ending with the arrival of Henry Parry Liddon in Oxford. A.G. Sulloway, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Temper* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 200–202.

essays on theological subjects that attempted to blend the old Anglican spirit of piety with the rigorous spirit of the new sciences and of German Biblical scholarship".[8] It should be pointed out that one of its contributors was Jowett, who as a fellow of an Oxford college had to be an Anglican priest and for that matter was supposed to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the doctrinal statement of the Church of England. "Jowett's sin, where the orthodox [Tractarian] priests were concerned, was that he apparently saw no incompatibility between his role as an Anglican priest and his publicly avowed doubts about the divinity of Christ and the historicity of the Bible".[9] Charges of heresy were repeatedly brought against him and he was even summoned before the Vice-Chancellor of the University, but all accusations were dismissed.

Although Jowett was Hopkins's tutor, the latter nonetheless showed sympathy for the Tractarian-side. Within months of his arrival in Oxford, the young Hopkins started to go to the weekly series of Tractarian lectures given by Liddon and Pusey. In November 1864 Hopkins made his first confession to Liddon, a year later Pusey became his confessor. Prior to their election, Hopkins, for obvious reasons, started to fulfil his religious duties in Christ Church Cathedral rather than worshipping at Balliol. But it must have been hard for the young Victorian to be loyal to both. "Hopkins's strains were personal as well as theological, for he must have felt as though he was being crushed to death between two killers, Pusey and Jowett, each of whom eyed him as fiercely for signs of disloyalty as they eyed one another for signs of fatal weakness".[10]

Probably the disastrous results for the Tractarian Movement in these years and Hopkins's continuing longing for a steadfast faith that was indifferent to Modernism and firmly rooted in dogmas and doctrines made him look again at the Church of Rome, which at the time was dominated by Ultramontanism. The *Syllabus Errorum*, issued in 1864 by Pope Pius IX, could hardly have come at a better time. So it was in his early Oxford years that Hopkins became aware of his Catholic interest. His crisis of faith diminished as a result of his preoccupation with rituals, ascesis and religious fasting on the one hand, and his artistic and poetic view on earthly beauty on the other.

There was also his presumed homosexuality to cope with. Young Victorians like Hopkins hardly saw any women. They were brought up by male teachers and surrounded by other boys in public school. College life in Oxford, as in other universities, was largely dominated by men, and the passionate and intellectual friendship with fellow students, and even the dons of the college,

8 Sulloway, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Temper*, 13.

9 Ibid., 12.

10 Ibid., 19.

was part of the Oxford culture. One could even speak of a 'homosexual sensibility' among Anglo-Catholic Victorians. Against this background, Hopkins's ability to cope with his homoerotic feelings and with the conviction that his sexual nature was irredeemably sinful, manifested itself in his ascetic practices, religious ritualism and radical choices. Or as Julia Saville remarkably noted, "ascetic practices that appear to mortify the flesh in the interests of spiritual invigoration may paradoxically prove sensually and erotically satisfying too".[11] What he probably hoped for was that his radical choice for the Church of Rome a couple of years later, burning his poetry and mastering his senses, would rid him of his homosexual feelings or at least channel them. There are some hints that Hopkins had intimate feelings for the handsome and artistically gifted Digby Mackworth Dolben, a distant cousin of his Oxford friend Robert Bridges, who, although still a Tractarian, was totally obsessed with Catholic rituals. Dolben's handsomeness as well as his fascination with Catholicism and rigorous fasting must have influenced Hopkins's decision to become a member of the Church of Rome.[12]

Hopkins and Dolben shared a conflict between secular and divine love. In Hopkins's opinion it was impossible to separate art and religion, a conviction shared by the Pre-Raphaelites and Ruskin. Therefore Hopkins's early Catholic awareness found its way into some religious poems he composed in Oxford, such as *Barnfloor and Winepress*, *New Readings*, *He hath abolished the Old Drouth*, and his unpublished notebook poem *Rest*.[13] In the latter, his religious quest reached a climax as he was desperately longing for inner peace and religious certainty:

> I have desired to go
> Where springs not fail;
> To fields where flies not the unbridled hail,
> And a few lilies bow.
>
> I have desired to be
> Where havens are dumb;
> Where the green water-heads may never come,
> As in the unloved sea.[14]

11 J. Saville, *A Queer Chivalry: The Homoerotic Asceticism of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 5.

12 Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism*, 23–27; White, *Hopkins*, 106–121.

13 Cf. GMH to Alexander William Mowbray Baillie, 20 July-14 August 1864. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. 1*, 62–66, at 64.

14 H. House (ed.), compl. by Graham Storey, *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 33. Cf. also his poem 'Heaven-Haven'.

In 1864, John Henry Newman, the old figure-head of Tractarianism, published his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*. This account of his conversion to Rome in 1845 had a profound impact on those Anglo-Catholics who were willing to take the same step. "Newman's *Apologia* is the central text in the mythology of Victorian Catholic conversion. It is the narrative by which many later converts, including Gerard Manley Hopkins, interpreted their experience".[15] Newman, fully aware of this, constructed his *Apologia* and his earlier satirical novel *Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert* (1848) in such a way that it would appeal directly to potential converts, especially those Tractarian students living in Oxford. In both publications Newman described his own conversion as a long spiritual struggle. He stressed that one should not become Catholic on basis of idealistic or romantic feelings, but instead should proceed to Rome by rational arguments and common sense: "Go by reason, not by feeling". Hopkins followed pretty much the same path, as we can see in his letters and notebooks, although he was keen to play down the influence of the spiritual and emotional crisis he experienced at the beginning of 1865.[16] Muller formulates the situation as follows:

> By the time Hopkins read the *Apologia*, he was already strongly attracted to Roman Catholicism. It was an attraction formed in adolescence from a compound of aesthetic medievalism, spiritual hunger, and rebellion against paternal authority. Newman's autobiographical writings offered Hopkins a carefully reasoned theological argument for conversion, while subtly affirming the prompting of his heart.[17]

Another indication that Hopkins was in the middle of a spiritual and religious search, was a remark in his notebook in the winter of 1865. There he argued that he wanted to read the biography of the French ecclesiastic, journalist and Dominican Henri-Dominique Lacordaire (1802–1861) who, after lapsing from the Catholic faith in his youth, found his way back to Rome and became a figurehead of liberal Catholicism in France.[18]

W.H. Gardner, N.H. MacKenzie (eds.), *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967[4]), 19.

15 Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism*, 12.

16 Mariani, *Hopkins*, 36.

17 Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism*, 20.

18 B. Bonvin, A. Duval, "Lacordaire (Henri-Dominique)", *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire* 9 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1976), 42–48.

Instead of what is often claimed, Hopkins had a long period of inner spiritual preparation before he finally converted to Rome.[19] His knowledge of Roman Catholicism was mostly gained from books rather than through personal contacts. He knew few Catholics, nor did he have a proper understanding of their social and political position as a minority in the mid-Victorian era. The English Catholic hierarchy was restored in 1850, a momentous event, since Catholic worship had been forbidden since Queen Elizabeth's reign. Nonetheless it took until 1908 before the Sacred College of Propaganda in Rome really handed over the administration of the English Church to the national bishops. So, in 1866, the year in which Hopkins converted to Rome, the structure of the English Catholic Church was still in its initial phase and anti-Catholic prejudices were still quite common, although Newman's positive influence on English Victorian society ended some of these prejudices among the more liberal Anglicans. Nonetheless, the integration of Catholics in English society still had a long way to go.

What may be rather more surprising, is that the different movements within the English Catholic Church were living in discord with each other. One of the larger Catholic factions was that of the Ultramontanes.[20] This 'party', focused on papal supremacy, gained international success among Catholics who sought to integrate Roman Catholicism into national government policy and underline papal infallibility.[21] The Ultramontanes advocated a strong devotional and pious, ritual-based spirituality. Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, the Passionist father Ignatius Spencer, the Oratorian Frederick William Faber and the wealthy Catholic layman William George Ward were among its leaders. Ward had been one of the leading figures of the Oxford Movement before he left the Church of England in 1845. In fact, most of these Ultramontanes were Oxford converts. On the other side of the English Catholic spectrum, we find Newman with his 'dialogue faction'. Although Newman could hardly be positioned in just one Catholic camp – he upheld a social conservatism and was dogmatically inspired – he did stand for a sort of 'liberal' Catholicism as far as the participation of the laity in the Church and non-clerical higher education was concerned.[22] In that sense Newman was probably closest to the old

19 Cf. '… the silent conviction that I was to become a Catholic has been present to me for a year perhaps …'. GMH to Edward William Urquhart, 24 September [1866]. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. 1*, 100–103, at 102.

20 E. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 262–286; J.D. Holmes, *More Roman Than Rome: English Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Burns & Oates, 1978), passim.

21 Formally proclaimed at the First Vatican Council in 1870.

22 Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 320–323.

English Catholic tradition, although in his final years he preferred a more exclusive and aggressive type of Catholicism. Finally there were some Catholic adherents with a more romantic and medieval vision of society, who neither favoured the spirituality of the Ultramontanists nor that of the Newmanians. Around the middle of the nineteenth century there were around 700,000 Catholics living in England, forming 3.5 per cent of all worshippers in the country.[23] The Catholic population consisted roughly of three different groups: the so-called 'Old Catholics' or recusants, families who had endured prosecutions over time. Secondly, there were the working-class Irish immigrants, flooding the country from the 1840s onward, due to economic malaise in their own country and to a great need for labour in the growing industry in English cities. And lastly the intellectual, newly converted Catholics, who had often matriculated at Oxford and Cambridge and had a past in the Oxford Movement or the High Church Party. The mutual understanding between these Catholic groups was often troublesome and laborious, and the Old Catholics especially were suspicious of the new intellectual converts, whom Hopkins would soon join.

In the fall of 1865 Hopkins, still at Oxford, composed his poem *The Halfway House*, in which he described the Church of England as a halfway house to Rome.[24] The young Victorian became convinced that the doctrine of transubstantiation, the cornerstone of his conviction, was best guaranteed in the Church of Rome, since the Anglican Church could claim no infallible authority for their sacramental beliefs.[25] Just like Newman, Hopkins would convert to Catholicism from a rational and intellectual point of view, not on a whim or guided by emotions or a romantic ideal, as could have been expected, considering Hopkins's artistic background. In January 1866, Hopkins wrote his most ascetic poem: *The Habit of Perfection*. In it, his preoccupation with ascesis is so completely tied up with the doctrine of Christ's incarnation that it left him no opportunity but to abandon his old faith.

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23 Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 205–206. In the religious census held in 1851 in England the number of Catholics were estimated around 252,783. Far less than the above mentioned 700,000, but the smaller figure probably compromised only those who regularly attended Mass or communicated.

24 The title of the poem is derived from Newman's statement that "there are but two alternatives, the way to Rome and the way to Atheism: Anglicanism is the halfway house on the one side, and Liberalism is the halfway house on the other". Sulloway, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Temper*, 18.

25 Cf. GMH to his father, 16–17 October 1866. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 114–119, at 115–116; Mariani, *Hopkins*, 15–16.

In 1866 Hopkins and his Balliol friend and future fellow convert William Addis spent their summer at Belmont, a Benedictine Monastery in Hereford, where they had a long conversation with Canon Paul Raynal about the 'doubtful validity' of Anglican orders. Addis noted in his diary, "I think he [Raynal] made a great impression on both of us and I believe that from that time our faith in Anglicanism was really gone".[26] Later, Addis remarked on Raynal that he was "probably the first Catholic priest Hopkins ever spoke to".[27] Soon after, Hopkins spent some time with his friends Willem Alexander Comyn Macfarlane and Alfred William Garrett in Horseham. There, in Horseham, his ongoing religious quest suddenly came to an end: he left the Anglican Church for Rome. Once he had taken his decision, he felt an inner spiritual rest and fulfilment. In a letter to his close friend and mentor Edward William Urquhart, who himself was an Anglican priest, Hopkins reflected on his transition of mid-July 1866: "In fact as I told you my conversion when it came was all in a minute".[28] Back in Oxford, Hopkins chose to say little about his 'great turn', although already within a week he 'confesses' his choice to Macfarlane, during a walk with him in the Sussex countryside.[29]

When in July 1866 Hopkins decided to become a Roman Catholic it was not a 'Pauline conversion on the road to Horseham'. Hopkins had been struggling with his religious feelings for several years and the defeat of the Tractarians in the mid-1860s must have made him even more aware of the fallibility of the Anglican Church. His discussion with Canon Raynal probably did the rest. In September 1866, at the start of his finals in Oxford, he travelled to the Birmingham Oratory where he would meet John Henry Newman to arrange for his reception. Without question Hopkins's familiarity with Newman's *Apologia* and his conversion-novel *Loss and Gain* directed him to Newman, although the Oratorian had not been directly involved in Hopkins's conversion until that time. That Hopkins was resolute about his conviction, is obvious from his first letter to Newman. He wrote "I do not want to be helped to any conclusions of belief, for I am thankful to say my mind is made up".[30] One could get the impression that to Hopkins, Newman was simply a church official who received him into the Roman Church. But Newman, having gone the same path earlier,

26 Quoted in: G.F. Lahey, *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Octagon Books, 1930), 21. However, Addis reverted to Anglicanism later on.

27 Quoted in: Mariani, *Hopkins*, 14.

28 GMH to Edward William Urquhart, 4 October 1866. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. 1*, 106–107, at 106.

29 Mariani, *Hopkins*, 17.

30 GMH to John Henry Newman, 28 August 1866. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. 1*, 93–94, at 93.

was acutely aware of the pain and the distress which the young Hopkins's radical choice would cause among his friends and relatives, as he wrote, "It is not wonderful that you should not be able to take so great a step without trouble and pain".[31] Contemporary readers have to realize that those in Victorian England who converted to Roman Catholicism opted for a second-class status in society, and that ecumenism was almost non-existent between the two churches and that there was still the sincere, fearful conviction that those not living in true faith were in peril of eternal damnation. In short: it felt a matter of life and death. In a long and emotional letter, dated 16–17 October 1866, Hopkins informed his father about his forthcoming reception into the Catholic Church. His father had begged him to delay his decision until after his graduation, but Hopkins refused, stating that:

> I cannot fight against God Who calls me to His Church: if I were to delay and die in the meantime I sh[oul]d have no plea why my soul was not forfeit. I have no power in fact to stir a finger: it is God Who makes the decision and not I.[32]

In a separate letter to his mother, around the same time, the emotional pain becomes even more tangible:

> Your letters, wh[ich] shew the utmost fondness, suppose none on my part and the more you think me hard and cold and that I repel and throw you off the more I am helpless not to write as if it were true. In this way I have no relief. You might believe that I suffer too. I am your very loving son, Gerard M. Hopkins.[33]

On the next day, 21 October 1866, Gerard Manley Hopkins was received into the Roman Catholic Church at the Birmingham Oratory by John Henry Newman,[34]

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31 John Henry Newman to GMH, 18 October 1866. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 120–121, at 120.

32 GMH to his father, 16–17 October 1866. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 114–119, at 115. Cf. 'But all converts agree in feeling that they are led by God's particular will. They are bound to go …' (part of a sermon) C. Devlin (ed.), *The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 23–25, at 25.

33 GMH to his mother, 20 October 1866. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 125–127, at 127.

34 Two of Hopkins's Balliol friends, William Edward Addis and Alfred William Garret, and Alexander Wood from Trinity were received into the Catholic Church by Newman shortly before him.

and a few weeks later, on November 4, he was confirmed by Archbishop Manning.[35] The two prominent Catholics – Newman and Manning – represented utterly different types of Catholicism, both of which would become apparent in the converted Hopkins and his religious poetry. For now, however, he was completely satisfied with the clear sign God had given him.

> Speak! whisper to my watching heart
> One word – as when a mother speaks
> Soft, when she sees her infant start,
> Till dimpled joy steals o'er its cheeks.
> Then, to behold Thee as Thou art,
> I'll wait till morn eternal breaks.[36]

2 'Don't Call the Jesuit Discipline Hard': Hopkins's Religious Vocation

Hopkins's call to become a priest must have been far less dramatic than his first conversion from the Established Church to Rome. His obsession with ascesis, rituals, the Eucharist and penitence had already steered him in the direction of Rome. It seemed that once he had taken this step, it also made him consider becoming a Catholic clergyman. Moreover, Newman and Manning both chose to become priests soon after their conversion, although they had already held orders in the Church of England.[37] Hopkins did not. In classical conversion literature, the choice for an inwardly spiritual life or the decision to enter a religious community has also been labelled conversion.[38] It is in this respect that we look upon Hopkins's religious vocation as his second conversion.

Almost immediately upon his official turn to Rome, in October 1866, the young Victorian began to reflect on his future and considered whether he had a vocation for the priesthood. Newman advised him not to hurry his decision and finish his studies first. In Lent 1867, still before his graduation, Hopkins left for the Benedictine monastery in Hereford which he had visited a couple of

35 Mariani, *Hopkins*, 36.

36 This is the ninth and last stanza of Hopkins's unpublished poem 'Nondum', with its epigraph 'Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself' (cf. Is. 45: 15), written in 1866. Gardner (ed.), *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 32–34.

37 Newman became Catholic in 1845 and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1847. Manning converted in 1851, noteworthy by a Jesuit, and became a clergyman in the Church of Rome in the same year.

38 H.P. de la Boullaye, "Conversion", *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire* 2 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1953), 2224–2265.

years earlier. His first impressions and the discussion he had with Father Raynal probably gave him the idea to decide to make his retreat with the Benedictines. He hoped that his self-chosen isolation would help him determine whether he had a religious vocation and, if he had, whether a monastic way of life, like the Benedictines, would be best suited for him.[39] He returned to Oxford without the result he had hoped for, and obtained a first in Classical Greats, the highest degree.

In September 1867, several months after his graduation, Hopkins was offered a post as a teacher at Newman's Birmingham Oratory boys' school, still trying to figure out his plans for the future. His religious quest dragged on for about two more years and it almost caused him to suffer a nervous breakdown.[40] For Hopkins, a potential religious vocation meant far more than just a call to the priesthood. It also touched upon his struggle with his emotional and homoerotic feelings, the strong disapproval of his parents, his own opinion on divine and secular love and his reflection on penitence, contrition and sin. Or as Muller formulated it: "believing his sexual nature to be irredeemably sinful, he sought a religious vocation that would demand the ego's absolute surrender".[41] In January 1868, Hopkins wrote to his best friend Robert Bridges, who was about to set sail for the continent, about his impending decision:

> This note accordingly is to say goodbye. The year you will be away I have no doubt will make a great difference in my position though I cannot know exactly what. But the uncertainty I am in about the future is so very unpleasant and so breaks my power of applying to anything that I am resolved to end it, which I shall do by going into a retreat at Easter at the latest and deciding whether I have a vocation to the priesthood.[42]

The teaching at the Birmingham Oratory took its toll and Hopkins had little time to consider his future. In a letter to his Oxford friend Alexander Baillie, dated February 12, 1868, Hopkins again complained about his time-consuming obligations at the school, although 'the boys are very nice indeed'. In the same letter, the young teacher reflects for the first time on his availability for the priesthood:

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39 Mariani, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 58.

40 Pick, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 22.

41 Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism*, 26.

42 GMH to Robert Bridges, 9 January 1868. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 172–173, at 172.

> I am expecting to take orders and soon, but I wish it to be secret still it comes about. Besides that it is the happiest and best way if practically is the only one. You know I once wanted to be a painter. But even if I could I w[oul]d not, I think, now, for the fact is that the higher and more attractive parts of the art put a strain upon the passions which I sh[oul]d think it unsafe to encounter. I want to write still and as a priest I very likely can do that too, not so freely as I sh[oul]d have liked, e.g. nothing or little in the verse way, but no doubt what w[oul]d best serve the cause of my religion.[43]

It seemed that Hopkins had already made up his mind, since he told Baillie in confidence that he would soon take orders. But what is more interesting, is his reflection on the moral impossibility of becoming a painter or an artist, because it would unleash his uncontrolled passions that he was so trying hard to suppress. "He [Hopkins] knows as deeply as he knows anything that once he makes up his mind to follow God's will for him and become a priest, he will have the only 'real sense of freedom' he has ever had".[44]

A special meeting at the Redemptorist school only served to strengthen his vocation. In 1868, the annual Easter retreat for Hopkins's pupils was organised by the Jesuit father Henry James Coleridge.[45] He was a product of Eton and, like Newman, of Oxford's Trinity College. As a Tractarian, Coleridge became a priest in the Established Church, but with the condemnation of Pusey and Newman, he changed sides. After a retreat with the Redemptorist Fathers, Coleridge went over to Rome in 1852. Four years later he was ordained in the Catholic Church and in 1857 he entered the Society of Jesus. In December 1867, Newman had already urged Hopkins to discuss 'matters', probably his vocation, with Coleridge during his stay for the retreat.[46] At the Jesuit's request, Hopkins later made a ten-day private retreat at Manresa House, the novitiate

43 GMH to Alexander William Mowbray Baillie, 12 February 1868. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 174–177, at 175.

44 Mariani, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 68.

45 Henry James Coleridge was probably the first Jesuit Hopkins met, although he was earlier introduced at the Birmingham Oratory to John Walford, a friend of Robert Bridges, who was, encouraged by Newman, about to enter the Society of Jesus. Hopkins's friends Alexander Wood, Henry Oxenham and notably Digby Dolben had had contacts with Jesuits, tough if Hopkins was aware of this we do not know. Mariani, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 27; A. Thomas, *Hopkins the Jesuit: The Years of Training* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 13–14, 20–21.

46 John Henry Newman to GMH, 30 December 1867. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 168.

of the Jesuits, in Roehampton.[47] The retreat, it was expected, would help Hopkins determine whether his vocation was genuine and steadfast and, if so, whether he would become a member of a contemplative or a rather more active religious order.[48] Apparently joining the secular clergy was not an option for Hopkins, probably because he still held a more romantic view of monastic life. On the last day of his retreat he wrote in his journal, "I have resolved to be a religious", but he does not seem to have decided on a specific religious order yet.[49] The answer came only a couple of days later, followed by an 'intellectual massacre'. Sadly, Hopkins's decision to enter the Society of Jesus was followed by his act of destroying all the finished copies of his poems. "Slaughter of the innocents", he ironically called it in his diary.[50] Some of Hopkins's earlier biographers, such as C. Day Lewis and I.A. Richards, have interpreted this act of destruction as a fundamental break in his life, a formal farewell to his artistic and poetic activities *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*. They distinguish between Hopkins the poet and Hopkins the Jesuit. Biographer John Pick, however, has successfully argued that there was no such division and that Hopkins destroyed his earlier work so that it might not interfere, as he feared, with his fullest dedication to the religious life.[51] He simply "wanted to enter the novitiate with nothing standing between him and God".

At that moment it was questionable whether Hopkins understood that his choice for the priesthood, and his decision to become a Jesuit did not necessarily mean that he had to suppress his emotions, senses and creativity. Ignatian spirituality in the second half of the nineteenth century, with its rigid, Ultramontane doctrinal model, did not leave much space for intellectual creativity, nor did the emphasis on obedience and self-denial for which the Jesuits were renowned. Later, after he had performed the *Spiritual Exercises* and had got to know Ignatius's motto "to search and find God in all things", Hopkins

47 Unfortunately it was also this man, Henry James Coleridge, who as editor rejected in 1876 Hopkins's most famous poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland* for the Jesuit periodical *The Month*.

48 In the nineteenth century the following larger clerical religious orders (re)-established themselves in England: Cistercians (1835/1837), Passionists (1842), Redemptorists (1843), Oratorians (1847), Dominicans and Franciscans (1850), and the Salesians (1887). The Jesuits were already present in the country before the Victorian era but became even more influential in that age. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, 220–230.

49 House (ed.), *The Journals and Papers*, 164–165.

50 Ibid., 165. Cf. Mt 2:13–23.

51 Cf. GMH to Robert Bridges, 7 August 1868. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 186–187, at 186.

would succeed in directing all his senses to God and to give praise to Him in his poetry.[52] "Surely one vocation cannot destroy another", his friend Richard Dixon once proclaimed prophetically to the Jesuit priest.[53]

The intellectualism of the Society of Jesus, its social apostolate, as well as its particular spirituality ('contemplative in action') were probably what made Hopkins decide to become a follower of Saint Ignatius, even though the order could hardly be called monastic. Jesuit and biographer Alfred Thomas added to these considerations the typical 'Englishness' of the English Province, seductive to Hopkins as a patriot.[54] But maybe also his self-dissatisfaction – in his journal he calls them 'sins' – about his waste of time and ineffectiveness, may have paved his path to the Jesuits, since the order was widely known for its detailed and rigid daily regimen.[55] In that sense his decision was a self-inflicted system of contrition, penitence, and purification. Newman, one of the first to hear the news, remarked about Hopkins's choice: "I am both surprised and glad at your news. […] I think it is the very thing for you. […] Don't call 'the Jesuit discipline hard', it will bring you to heaven".[56]

3 'The World is Charged with the Grandeur of God': Hopkins's Third Conversion

"When Hopkins became a Jesuit he 'moved out of the mainstream of English society' and into a 'subculture' that seemed 'exotic and even sinister to most Englishmen'", remarked one of Hopkins's biographers about his radical step.[57] In the second half of the nineteenth century, the social position of Roman Catholics in English society had steadily improved, though eruptions of anti-Catholic sentiments could always suddenly surface. The Jesuits, re-established worldwide in 1814, had met with the severest opposition from Protestants as well as Catholics during the preceding century. The Jesuit foundations of several new (boarding) schools and parish churches in the Victorian age still

52 Some have argued that Hopkins was already familiar with the *Spiritual Exercises* before he entered the Jesuit's noviciate. W. Bronzwaer (ed.), *Gerard Manley Hopkins. Gedichten*, [Keuze uit zijn poezië met vertalingen en commentaren] (Baarn: Ambo, 1984), 34–35.

53 Richard Watson Dixon to GMH, 4–14 November 1881. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. 1*, 496–498, at 496.

54 Thomas, *Hopkins the Jesuit*, 19–20.

55 Cf. White, *Hopkins*, 113.

56 GMH to John Henry Newman, 14 May 1868. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. 1*, 178.

57 B. Bergonzi, *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1977), 60.

fostered fear among some Anglicans.[58] Nonetheless, the re-establishment of the English Jesuit Province in 1803 did occasion a steady increase of new candidates during the nineteenth century, from 73 Jesuits in 1815 to 347 in 1870.[59]

Before Hopkins entered the novitiate in the autumn of 1868 he went on a walking tour of Switzerland with one of his Oxford friends. Although he had abandoned his poetic aspirations, the diary of his Swiss holiday is full of lively and colourful observations of small villages, people and nature. The journal offers us a first glimpse of a new vocabulary, including words like *inscape, instress, scape* and *outscape*. Such language would become the cornerstone of his later nature sonnets.[60]

On 7 September 1868 Hopkins started his new life at Manresa House, the novitiate of the Jesuits in Roehampton.[61] During the following two years Hopkins was subjected to a tight schedule and strict discipline. Bearing in mind his own ascetic practices from years earlier, he was well 'prepared', although it was his novice master Fr. Peter Gallwey who decided if and when such extra practices of penance were allowed.[62] The Victorian Jesuit studied hard, meditated often, listened daily to exhortations and in what little free time he had, made some entries in his diary and wrote a few letters to his mother and his friend Robert Bridges.[63] Like any novice's, Hopkins's time was mainly spent on a thorough introduction into the Society's *Constitutions*, into Ignatian spirituality, the Long Retreat and the *Spiritual Exercises.* The latter changed Hopkins's mindset and poetic reflections in such a dramatic way, that we might well speak of a third conversion. Hopkins's biographer Pick used the following words to describe the profound impact of the *Spiritual Exercises* on the Victorian poet. To underline their effect on Hopkins I give the quotation almost in full length:

58 F. Edwards, *The Jesuits in England. From 1580 to the present day* (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1985), 188–200.

59 Thomas, *Hopkins the Jesuit*, 15.

60 White, *Hopkins*, 162–167.

61 Already before his tour to Switzerland, Hopkins's application for admission was accepted by the Jesuit Provincial Fr. Weld on May 19th. 1868. For a detailed account of Hopkins's two-years novitiate, see Thomas, *Hopkins the Jesuit*, 23–86.

62 Thomas, *Hopkins the Jesuit*, 39–40. Noteworthy his earlier poem *The Habit of Perfection* (1866) had as subtitle 'The novice'.

63 The novices were encouraged to keep a spiritual diary to measure their spiritual progression. Unfortunately Hopkins's spiritual diaries are lost or destroyed. In his 'secular' diary the entries on his spiritual experience during the novitiate are scarce.

> They [the *Spiritual Exercises*] became a part of his life and attitude. They gave direction to all he experienced, thought, and wrote. They influenced his most exuberant and joyous poems; they were part of his sufferings and desolation. [...] They fashioned his reaction to nature and beauty. Their echo is found in his humility, his asceticism, in his scrupulousness, his consciousness of imperfection, in his abnegation and in the integrity with which he faced hardship and disappointment. His attitude toward poetry and fame was shaped by them. They moulded his native temperament and sensibility to an ideal of perfection. Without knowing something of them we can hardly know the priest-poet.[64]

Probably the compulsory long 'recreational' walks of the novices through the countryside and their work on the land during the hay making season inspired Hopkins more than once to describe trees and sunsets in all their beauty in his diary.[65] These entries could be regarded as a general exercise for his later nature sonnets and they already give us a glimpse of Hopkins's developing sacramental view of nature: "One day when the bluebells were in bloom I wrote the following. I do not think I have seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it".[66]

On 8 September 1870 Hopkins took his first solemn vows. A couple of days later Gerard was sent to Stonyhurst in hilly Lancashire, where the Jesuits ran a public school and the adjoining seminary of St. Mary's Hall, to study philosophy as part of the Jesuit training. During the following three years the teachings of St. Thomas, or rather his philosophical works as interpreted by the sixteenth-century Spanish Jesuit Francisco Suárez, became second nature to the group of thirty-five students, of which Hopkins was part. Regarding the religious life as well as the influence of the *Spiritual Exercises* on Hopkins during these years there is little to say. At the end of his second year at St. Mary's Hall, the young Jesuit discovered the philosophical works of the medieval Oxford Franciscan scholar Duns Scotus.[67] Scotus's metaphysical worldview and his interpretation of Aristotle had a profound impact on Hopkins. Not only his future poems but also his current detailed descriptions of nature could be seen as cultural and artistic echoes of Scotus's metaphysical worldview.

64 Pick, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 25–26.

65 Cf. House (ed.), *The Journals and Papers*, 189–193, 195–196, 199.

66 House (ed.), *The Journals and Papers*, 199.

67 According to Devlin 'it was almost certainly through Suarez that he [Hopkins] came to know Scotus'. Devlin (ed.), *The sermons and devotional writings*, 292.

Yet another development during his philosophate is important for understanding the essence of his third conversion. Already during his arrival year at Stonyhurst, Hopkins had installed some important changes in his vocabulary and intellectual language, using neologisms such as 'inscape' and 'instress' ever more frequently and thoroughly. At this juncture, they no longer functioned as mere descriptions of nature, but were widened: "All the world is full of inscape", Hopkins wrote in his diary.[68] The concept 'inscape' could best be defined as "the outward reflection of the *inner* nature of a thing, or a sensible copy or representation of its individual essence".[69] Ellsberg adds to this definition that the absolute selfhood of this something is in harmony with other things.[70] Hopkins himself defined 'inscape' as 'the very soul of art'.[71] 'Inscape' is for him thus far more than just 'shape' as the following description shows:

> But what I note it all for is this: before I had always taken the sunset and the sun as quite out of gauge with each other, as indeed physically they are, for the eye after looking at the sun is blunted to everything else and if you look at the rest of the sunset you must cover the sun, but today I inscaped them together and made the sun the true eye and ace of the whole, as it is. It was all active and tossing out light and started as strongly forward from the field as a long stone or a boss in the knob of the chalice-stem: it is indeed by stalling it so that it falls into scape with the sky.[72]

The parallel between 'inscape' and a Scotist concept such as *haecceitas* is striking. Both notions merge in the philosophical reflections that Hopkins jotted down during his holiday in August 1872 in Douglas on the Isle of Man. His journal of this period is packed with novelties, rich descriptions of the sea and sky. It is plausible that Hopkins's detailed entries in his diary as well as his frequent use of the word 'inscape' during these years were not only his way to fill in the intellectual and artistic void that resulted from his renunciation of poetic aspirations, but they also disclose his very 'Ignatian' approach to admiring God's beauty in all things.

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68 House (ed.), *The Journals and Papers*, 230.

69 W.A.M. Peters, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Critical Essay towards the Understanding of his Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970^2), 2.

70 M.R. Ellsberg, *Created to Praise. The Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 11.

71 GMH to Richard Watson Dixon, 30 June – 3 July 1886. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 791–797, at 793.

72 House (ed.), *The Journals and Papers*, 196.

In his later commentaries on the *Spiritual Exercises,* Hopkins frequently used the word 'scape' as a particular translation of the *species* in the scholastic theory of knowledge. The same was true for that other word, 'instress', which he used in his commentary. 'Instress' functions as a translation of the scholastic concept of *actus* – i.e. the principle of an object's actuality and continuity. "Placing 'instress' by the side of 'inscape", we note that the first term will strike the poet as the force that holds the latter together; 'instress' is the power that continually actualises the inscape'.[73]

In June 1873 Hopkins passed his philosophical *De Universa* examinations and two months later he was transferred to Roehampton for the so-called regency, before enrolling as a theology student. At Roehampton's noviciate he taught rhetoric to the Jesuit juniors for one year. In comparison to the long days of study at the philosophate, Hopkins's workload at Roehampton was quite limited, giving him ample time to jot down observations in his notebook. On one particular evening passages were written about a: "fine sunset Nov. 3 – balks of grey cloud searched with long crimsonings running along their hanging folds – this from the lecture room window".[74] Such ponderings were characteristic of Hopkins's personal notes and on 20 April 1874 we find him writing the following tribute to nature:

> Young elm leaves lash and lip the sprays. This has been a very beautiful day – fields about us deep green lighted underneath with white daisies, yellower fresh green of leaves above which bathes the skirts of the elms, and their tops are touched and worded with leaf too. […] my eye was struck by such a sense of green in the tufts and pashes of grass, with purple shadow thrown back on the dry black mould behind them, as I do not remember ever to have been exceeded in looking at green grass.[75]

His year of regency passed smoothly, and Hopkins was then sent to St. Beuno College for his theology curriculum. St. Beuno's, located in St. Asaph in the beautiful surroundings of North Wales, would become the location where he ended, upon special request of his superior, his long self-inflicted poetic silence. He often depicted his Welsh surroundings in his poetry and letters, telling his mother that: "the Welsh landscape has a great charm and when I see Snowdon and the mountains in its neighbourhood, as I can now, with the

73 Peters, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 14.

74 House (ed.), *The Journals and Papers*, 240.

75 House (ed.), *The Journals and Papers*, 242–243.

clouds lifting, it gives me a rise of the heart".[76] He confides to his diary: "Looking all round but most in looking far up the valley I felt an instress and charm of Wales".[77] In St. Beuno's Hopkins not only continued his praises to nature, but also started to take a serious interest in the Welsh language and folklore.

Nonetheless, most of his time was spent reading and attending lectures on moral and dogmatic theology, canon law, church history, Hebrew, the scriptures and in Hopkins's third year there were practical exercises in 'cases of conscience'. The whole course was very intense and Hopkins more than once showed "signs of strain resulting from a combination of deteriorating health and the mental fatigue of studies of a sort (including study methods) not wholly congenial to him".[78]

His frequently reported indigestion and the cold weather, worsened by the insufficient heating of the building, made it hard for Hopkins to concentrate on his studies and frequently led to periods of depression. His superiors soon noticed his poor health and his deteriorating mental condition. As a consequence he was 'summoned' to relax more and was given the advice to take up his poetry again. Hence, by the end of 1875, after seven silent years, he wrote his first poem: 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'. The poem referred to the shipwreck in the mouth of the Thames,[79] an accident in which five Franciscan nuns, exiles from the German Kulturkampf, had drowned while exclaiming, "O Christ, come quickly".

In this first poetic utterance, the influence of the *Spiritual Exercises* and Hopkins's readings of the stories of Christ's passion and resurrection are abundantly clear. The first stanzas portray not only the actual storm, but bring into account the poet's own mental struggle during his conversion. The total surrender of both the nuns and Hopkins to God's will was central. Aside this passion-based line, one cannot neglect the influence of the 'Two Standards' of the *Spiritual Exercises* in the closing stanzas. Hopkins's inner certainty, once he had decided to become a religious, is reflected in the triumphalist style of the *Wreck*, which closely resembles the style of the *Two Standards*.[80]

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76 GMH to his mother, 20–21 September 1874. Thornton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Vol. I*, 236–238, at 237.

77 House (ed.), *The Journals and Papers*, 258.

78 Thomas, *Hopkins the Jesuit*, 181.

79 There is far more to be said about this poem, its development, and impact on other poetry. E.g. chapter 2 ("'One 'fetch' in him". Hopkins's Ultramontane Vision in The Wreck of the Deutschland') in Muller, *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism*; Leo Martin van Noppen, *Gerard Manley Hopkins. The wreck of the Deutschland* (s.l. 1980).

80 Cf. also Hopkins's own comment on the Two Standards. Devlin (ed.), *The sermons and devotional writings*, 178–185.

At last his self-inflicted ban on poetry was broken, since Hopkins had to 'obey' the will of his superior, according to the rules of the Society of Jesus, he could now freely merge his philosophical worldview taken from Scotus, his concept of 'inscape' and 'instress', and his admiration for nature into his poetry. His poems became a means of praising God's beauty. This was done in the light of St. Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, and Hopkins used the rules for 'election' from the *Exercises* in his poetry. All his senses were directed to God, according to the 'principle of Foundation', the starting point of the *Exercises*, in which one is exhorted to use all created things to attain to God. The parallel between Hopkins's highly sensual sonnets about nature and the *applicatio sensuum* as a form of meditation in the *Spiritual Exercises* is also striking.

Hopkins's poems were not only a means to praise God, they were also an *act* of praying in the Ignatian style ('contemplative in action'). Or as Ignatius once wrote: 'if everything is directed towards God, everything is prayer'.[81] Especially in Hopkins's nature sonnets there is another element that reveals the influence of Ignatian spirituality, namely the tendency 'to seek and find God in all things'. For Hopkins, the fact that nature exists with all its beauty was in itself an argument for the existence of God. "The world is charged with the grandeur of God", as the first line of his 1877 poem *God's Grandeur* begins. This also resembles a certain parallel with one of the major proofs given by Augustine for the existence of God. Not only in Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, but also in some other poems he wrote during his theological curriculum (*Spring*, *Pied Beauty*, *The Windhover*, *The Starlight Night* and *Hurrahing in Harvest*), his utter sacramental vision of nature is manifest.[82] Notwithstanding the quality of his earlier poems, only after Hopkins had joined the Jesuits and interiorised Ignatian spirituality and the works of Duns Scotus, did he find a way to express his sensitivity and his religious experience in its best form by praising, through inscapes, the beauty of God's nature with his poems.[83]

This third conversion became perhaps most apparent in Hopkins's last nature sonnet *As Kingfishers Catch Fire*, which binds the natural activities of each living being to its own inner existence. When a creature lives up to its own existence (its inner strife), it automatically praises the God who has created all living species. Man can choose not to live up to his own inner strife, animals

81 Letter 4012, 'Epistolae et Instructiones S. Ignatii de Loyola', vol. 6. of *Monumenta Ignatiana*, vol. 33 of *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu* (Madrid: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1907), 91.

82 Pick, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 52–72.

83 Peters, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 6; Pick, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 32.

and plants cannot. In their existence and in "doing what they do", they automatically glorify their Creator:

> As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
> As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
> Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
> Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
> Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
> Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
> Selves – goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
> Crying What I do is me: for that I came.[84]
>
> Í say more: the just man justices;
> Keeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
> Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –
> Chríst – for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men's faces.

4 Closing Remarks

Most likely as a consequence of his poor health, Hopkins was not allowed by his superior to complete the full theological training. In September 1877, after passing his theological exams (minor course), he was ordained a priest, and would work as a curate in various cities in the years to come. He never ceased to write poetry. In October 1881 Hopkins started his tertianship in Roehampton. Still, during this special spiritual year, which was the last stage of the Jesuit formation, Hopkins jotted down some notes on the *Spiritual Exercises*.

The year of 1884 installed a final turnabout: what ought to have been the crowning achievement of an academic and religious career, namely the appointment to a chair at the Royal University of Ireland in Dublin, for Hopkins became dreadful last years. The workload was too much for him, his health deteriorated further, and as an English nationalist he became bitter regarding the Irish national cause. And perhaps most of all, he sunk into a mental crisis as a result of his growing awareness that he could not cope with the incompatibility of his religious and artistic feelings. In those years, 1884–1889, often referred to as his "winter world", he wrote his so-called *Terrible sonnets*. These

84 Cf. Jn 18:37.

can be read as a personal lamentation, expressing his feelings of abandonment by God. On 8 June 1889, at the age of only forty-five, he died from the effects of typhoid fever.

Hopkins's threefold conversion as I have discussed it above was quite unique. The emotional and spiritual pain found a wonderful expression in his poetry and personal notes. Hopkins's conversion to Rome was probably the hardest experience, certainly for his family and friends, although the relationship with his parents was later restored. They were present at his deathbed. His second conversion, the decision to become a religious, was preceded by a new spiritual struggle. His decision to enter the Society of Jesus in 1868 marked a new point in his life and it determined his poetical opinions. Hopkins's last conversion closely followed his second. The influence of the *Spiritual Exercises* as well as Scotist works on his (later) poetry could not, however, have borne such fruit without the two preceding conversions. Precisely this longstanding process of growth rendered his final conversion into the most splendid and thorough one. It was the genius Hopkins who was able not only to give direction to his feelings, but also to articulate these in an Ignatian way in order to praise God. At last his soul was not only wounded with the 'instrument of salvation' but he himself also became the living example of 'God's grandeur'.

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CHAPTER 9

Pope Francis's Call for the Conversion of the Church in Our Time

Catherine E. Clifford

The pontificate of Pope Francis has brought new energy to the Catholic Church. Recently, this renewed energy has produced a fresh debate, especially in the first of two synodal gatherings dedicated to the reflection on the pastoral care of the family – a debate which some consider worrisome, but which he himself considers a sign of health in the ecclesial body and part of a necessary process of ecclesial discernment. When asked in a recent interview why some in the Church appear to be confused or disoriented by this discussion, to the point of claiming that the Church has become like a "ship without a rudder", Pope Francis directed the attention of his interlocutor to the programme laid out in his Apostolic Exhortation of November 2013: "Check it out, it's very clear. *Evangelii gaudium* is very clear".[1] To understand the agenda of this pontificate then, let us take Pope Francis at his word and revisit this document which, he writes, has "a programmatic significance and important consequences" for the life of the Catholic Church today (EG 25).[2]

Evangelii gaudium is a *thick* document. Not only is it lengthy (its 288 paragraphs and 217 footnotes fill over 200 pages in a paperback edition), in French parlance, one might call it *dense* and substantive; each pithy paragraph gives reason to pause and reflect. *Evangelii gaudium* is not an easy read, and covers a lot of ground. It would be impossible to draw out all of the rich insights of this comprehensive document in a single essay. In this space I propose to focus on a number of key insights relating to what Pope Francis calls the "pastoral and missionary conversion" of the Church, the project at the heart of his exhortation. This reflection will be organized in three parts, each reflecting on a different aspect of this ecclesial conversion: first, a return to the kerygmatic

1 E. Piqué, "Pope Francis: 'God Has Bestowed on me a Healthy Dose of Unawareness'", *La Nación* (7 December 2014): <http:/www.lanacion.com.ar/1750350-pope-francis-god-has-bestowed-on-me-a-health-dose-of-unawareness> (Accessed 20 December 2014).

2 Pope Francis, "Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation 'On the Joy of the Gospel'": <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014). All subsequent references will be abbreviated simply as EG, followed by paragraph number.

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proclamation of faith and witness; second, the spiritual conversion required to ground such a project; and third, the conversion of ecclesial structures required to renew the Church in our day in view of a more effective proclamation of the good news. But before proceeding, a few preliminary remarks are in order regarding the unique character of this document and the vision of 'mission' that informs it.

1 Some Distinctive Features of *Evangelii gaudium*

A Centripetal Dynamic: The Local Churches for a New Catholicity

This document, which takes as its theme the joy of the gospel, is a post-synodal apostolic exhortation. As such, it is intended to convey the concerns and the many recommendations surfaced by the bishops gathered for the international synod and to reflect on the ways and means to set the Church on course for a new evangelization in such a way as to call the faithful to action. The synod of bishops was established by Pope Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council as a collegial body to advise the pope on matters of concern to the universal church.[3] Few would dispute the fact that in the past fifty years these gatherings have remained more an instrument of the papacy than the effective expression of collegiality hoped for by many council fathers.[4] The bishops' freedom of speech and ability to engage in open debate has been greatly curtailed by synodal procedures. Agendas are set and procedures determined by the popes who appoint many of the synod participants and prepare the final document. In some cases these texts have had so little resemblance to the "propositions" emerging from the bishops' discussions, that a common witticism went around to the effect that the post-synodal documents were drafted before the bishops even arrived for the meeting. Under Pope Benedict's leadership synodal procedures began to permit a freer exchange of ideas. At the most

3 Paul VI, "Motu Proprio Apostolos Sollicitudo" (September 15, 1965): <http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19650915_apostolica-sollicitudo.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014). See also: Second Vatican Council, "Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops" (*Christus dominus*), 5 and 36: <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014).

4 Notably, Maximos IV Saigh, Patriarch of the Melkites, pleaded for the establishment of a permanent synod to advise the pope. For an English translation of his speech, see: "The Supreme Senate of the Catholic Church", H. Küng, Y. Congar, D. O'Hanlon (eds.), *Council Speeches of Vatican II* (Glen Rock: Paulist, 1963), 133–137; See *AS* II/4, 516–519.

recent synod, Pope Francis set the stage for a wide-ranging discussion of complex pastoral challenges and differing approaches to the care of Christian families.[5]

Evangelii gaudium may be one of the most collegial post-synodal apostolic exhortations to emerge from the papal magisterium. In all, it draws explicitly from the *propositiones* of the synod no less than thirty times.[6] Remarkably, as if to underline the contributions of the bishops from each region to the universal church, Pope Francis cites messages and pastoral documents issued by nine different regional bodies of bishops from a wide diversity of contexts including those of Latin America (CELAM), Brazil, the Philippines, India, Italy, France, the Congo, the United States and Europe.[7] While many have noted the frequent reference to the Aparecida document of the Latin American Conference of Bishops, a text in which Jorge Bergoglio had an important hand, it is important not to lose sight of this wider focus. Francis refers a dozen times to post-synodal apostolic exhortations issued by his predecessors following regional synods of bishops and draws from other papal addresses and homilies

5 Pope Francis, "Greeting of Pope Francis to the Synod Fathers During the First General Congregation of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod Of Bishops (October 6, 2014)": <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141006_padri-sinodali.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014).

6 Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations contain abundant references to the *propositiones* of the bishops, though at times this has the feel of 'proof-texting'.

7 Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops [CELAM], *Aparecida Document* (29 June 2007): this document – in which Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio had a direct hand – is cited 7 times. Third General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops [CELAM], *Puebla Document* (23 March 1979): cited twice. Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brazil, "Exigências evangélicas e éticas de superação da miséria e da fome" (April 2002). Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, "Pastoral Letter: What is Happening to our Beautiful Land?" (29 January 1988). United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care" (2006); "Pastoral Letter Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship" (November 2007). Conférence des évêques de France, Conseil Famille et Société, "Élargir le mariage aux personnes de même sexe? Ouvrons le débat!" (28 September 2012). Azione Cattolica Italiana, "Messaggio della XIV Assemblea Nazionale alla Chiesa ed al Paese", (8 May 2011). Comité permanent de la conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo, "Message sur la situation sécuritaire dans le pays" (5 December 2012). Indian Bishops' Conference, "Final Declaration of the XXX Assembly: The Role of the Church for a Better India" (8 March 2013). Second Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops, "Final Message", *L'Osservatore Romano*, [Weekly English-language edition] (27 October 1999).

given in the context of such meetings in Asia, Africa, Oceania, America, Latin America, and the Middle East.[8]

The recent tradition of the papal magisterium has left us with an overriding image of papal teaching as something which moves from the centre in Rome out to the periphery of the local churches, or which comes from the 'top' down to the bishops and the broader community of baptized faithful. We have conceived of reception as a unidirectional reality, forgetting that, from the earliest times, the insights of local and regional churches and councils were often received by, and served to enrich, the wider church.

As yet another expression of this trend, consider the extent to which our notion of the exercise of the papal magisterium has become highly personalized. By this I mean that we have become accustomed to looking in papal documents for the personal theological perspectives of the popes in whose name the teaching is given. (This, even when we know that some of these documents – including papal encyclicals – are drafted with the help of competent committees and teams of theological consultants.) Pope Francis has left his unmistakable mark on this document, as is clear from the direct and unvarnished style of discourse. When he writes of discernment and the perils of contemporary spirituality, the rich knowledge and experience of his Jesuit formation are clearly on display.

Nonetheless, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that Pope Francis has made every effort to integrate into these reflections the teaching of his brother bishops in such a manner that the catholicity of the whole church might be enriched by the experience and wisdom from the many diverse contexts of the local churches where Christians strive to witness to the gospel today. I am not aware of any precedent for this centripetal movement in the recent history of the papal magisterium. Such an approach reflects more than a simple change of style. It might reasonably be argued that this entire document serves as a concrete example of a substantive shift toward a more collegial expression of

8 It would be impossible to list them all here. They include, by way of example, John Paul II, "Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (6 November 1999)", *AAS* 92 (2000) – cited in notes 58, 77, 95, 99, 134; "Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (14 September 1995)", *AAS* 88 (1996) – cited in notes 57 and 92; "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* (22 November 2001) – cited in notes 25, 91, 94; "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (22 January 1999)", *AAS* 91 (1999) – cited in note 149. Benedict XVI, "Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* (14 September 2012)", *AAS* 104 (2012) – cited in note 203; "Address at the Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (13 May 2007)", *AAS* 99 (2007), cited in note 165; "Homily at Mass for the Opening of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (13 May 2007), Aparecida, Brazil", *AAS* 99 (2007) – cited in note 13.

the teaching office, one that understands reception no longer in unidirectional terms, but as a process of mutual exchange. *Evangelii gaudium* is itself a concrete sign of the "pastoral conversion" of the papacy that Pope Francis is committed to initiating, as we shall see below.

Collegial Responsibility for Discernment and Conversion

It is important to keep this perspective in mind when considering the comprehensive project for the conversion and reform of the Church proposed in *Evangelii gaudium.* Pope Francis has indicated on numerous occasions that this is not a 'personal' project or vision of the Church and its mission, but an expression of a collegial recognition of the necessity for such a conversion expressed through the international synod of bishops[9] and by the College of Cardinals during the general congregations that preceded the conclave of election.[10] These conversations within the college of bishops have given shape to the mandate for his pontificate. As a close reading of *Evangelii gaudium* reveals, this reform project is far more extensive than a simple adjustment of structures for the management of Vatican finances or of the bureaucracy of the Roman Curia.

That said, *Evangelii gaudium* is not a detailed programme for the conversion of the Church in view of the new evangelization. Pope Francis himself describes it as a set of 'guidelines' (EG 17, 33) intended to assist the local bishops as they enter into a process of 'pastoral discernment' to determine what is needed to return to the heart of the gospel today at every level of ecclesial life and witness. With a substantial dose of realism, he recognizes that it would not be possible, from his vantage point in Rome, to determine the appropriate means for carrying out this 'new phase of evangelism' in every context: "Nor do I believe that the papal magisterium should be expected to offer a definitive or complete word on every question which affects the Church and the world. It is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound 'decentralisation'" (EG 16). Seen in this light, Pope Francis's exhortation might be seen as a 'charge'; as a set of principles to guide the substantial task of discernment and reform to be undertaken by the

9 In writing this Exhortation, Pope Francis writes, "I am reaping the rich fruits of the Synod's labours" (EG 16).

10 In his interview with Elizabetta Piqué, Pope Francis commented, "in pre-conclave meetings, as cardinals we demanded lots of things which we should certainly not forsake". Cf. "Pope Francis: God Has Bestowed on Me".

bishops with the full collaboration of all the faithful. The predominant note is one of collegiality and co-responsibility.

2 Return to the Kerygma: Conversion to Christ

Encounter with Christ and Renewal in the Spirit of the Beatitudes: Joy and Mercy

"The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew" (EG 1). These opening words sum up Pope Francis's invitation to return to the heart of the gospel through a renewed experience of personal encounter with Christ in daily prayer, in the renewed study of the scriptures, in the liturgical life of the Church, and in service to the poor. From this personal encounter alone flows our deepest identity as persons and the communion we share with one another in Christ's ecclesial body, the Church. This relationship of loving communion overflows in loving concern for others, so that they too might come to know the merciful love of God. Encounter with the transformative love of Christ is the source of all conversion, revealing at the deepest level who we are as persons and as a community. It is the wellspring of genuine mission.

> Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others? (EG 8).

Joy is among the first signs of conversion to Christ: the joy at hearing the good news of God's steadfast love and mercy that has entered into history through his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection. The Risen Christ continues to meet us today in our personal and collective history. Joy is among the most unmistakable gifts of the Spirit, second only to love (Gal 5:22–23). The joy of the gospel is the joy of the beatitudes – not the shallow and passing pleasure of

worldly enjoyment[11] – but the deep inner happiness that comes from the quiet yet unshakable conviction that we are loved unconditionally, with all of our faults and limitations. It is the joy of those who are poor in spirit, humble, mourning, hungering and thirsting for justice, merciful, pure of heart, making peace, and ready to accept persecutions because of Christ and the gospel. It is the happiness of the just who, says the psalmist, walks in God's way (Ps 1). The joy of the gospel dwells in those who witness to Christ's victory over sin and death (Jn 20:20).[12] They walk in the confidence that love has triumphed and will have the last word.

The joy that is a fruit of God's Spirit is intimately linked to the beatitude of mercy, the "greatest of all virtues".[13] Those who have received God's free gift of forgiveness are moved to show mercy to others. As a consequence, "The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel" (EG 114). Mercy is not a reward for the deserving, but a free expression of God's compassion toward those who are lost and powerless to change by their own effort.

> God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another 'seventy times seven' (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew (EG 3).

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11 "Sometimes we are tempted to find excuses and complain, acting as if we could only be happy if a thousand conditions were met. To some extent this is because our 'technological society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, yet has found it very difficult to engender joy'". (EG 7).

12 Edward Schillebeeckx notes that in the presence of the liberating love of the historical Jesus, being sad was an "existential impossibility". *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology.* Trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Crossroad, 1979), 200–217. [Original version: *Jezus, het verhaal van een levende* (Bloemendaal: H. Nelissen, 1974)].

13 Here Pope Francis cites the very traditional teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas on the virtues: "Thomas thus explains that, as far as external works are concerned, mercy is the greatest of all the virtues: 'In itself mercy is the greatest of the virtues, since all the others revolve around it and, more than this, it makes up for their deficiencies. This is particular to the superior virtue, and as such it is proper to God to have mercy, through which his omnipotence is manifested to the greatest degree'" (EG 37). Cf. *S. Th.*, II-II, q. 30, a. 4. The external works of mercy are rooted in charity, the form of all virtues.

The joy of the gospel is neither a personal possession nor secret treasure meant for a chosen few or privileged elite. As Pope Francis reminds us repeatedly, God's love excludes no one. It is Good News that cannot be contained. The missionary engagement of the Christian is thus a free response to the unmerited gift of God's reconciling love revealed in Jesus Christ. The love of Christ raises us up to our full dignity as human persons and at the same time impels us to transcend ourselves and to reproduce in our own lives the pattern of God's self-giving love. "When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfilment. For 'here we discover a profound law of reality: that life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is certainly what mission means'" (EG 10).[14] Christian joy carries us forth to share the love of Christ by our whole way of life, as leaven in the dough and salt for the earth. "Before all else, the gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others. Under no circumstance can this invitation be obscured" (EG 39).

The Kerygmatic Character of the Church's Proclamation

Encounter with the person of Christ and the experience of God's merciful love are to be at the centre of all evangelizing activity. By inviting all Christians to return to the heart of the gospel message, Pope Francis echoes the personalist understanding of divine disclosure embraced by the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. The message revealed in Jesus Christ is not a set of propositional truth-claims, doctrines, or moral principles to be adhered to, but is essentially a disclosure of God's very self, poured out in love and inviting us into a life-giving and divinizing friendship: "It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will, which was that people can draw near to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature" (*Dei Verbum*, 2). All of the Church's evangelizing activity is to be directed toward this central message, and to accompany others as they seek to encounter the love and mercy of Christ.

> It is the message capable of responding to the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart. The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express God's saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on

14 This definition of mission is drawn from the *Aparecida Document*. See EG, note 4.

> our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical (EG 165).

In this vein, *Evangelii gaudium* invites those entrusted with the tasks of preaching and catechesis to take great care in the preparation of homilies and lessons, to study the scriptures and attend carefully to the 'central message' of the gospel (EG 148–149). Those engaged in pastoral ministry are invited to a renewed study of the scriptures (145–150) and practice of *lectio divina* (153–153), and to renew their attentiveness to the lives of those they serve (154–155) so as to communicate the central message of the gospel with greater effect. Indeed, Pope Francis insists that "The study of the sacred scriptures must be a door opened to every believer" (EG 175), since the Word is the basis of all evangelization. One might consider this as one of the yet-unrealized aspects of Vatican II's project for ecclesial renewal, which sought to restore the central place of the scriptures in the life and teaching of the Church. While the liturgical renewal brought a more ample selection of biblical texts to the hearing of the faithful, many ordinary Catholics remain unfamiliar with the scriptures today and are poorly schooled in the practices of meditation or *lectio* with the Word.

"All Christian formation", writes Pope Francis, "consists in entering more deeply into the kerygma". This is especially true of catechesis where it "constantly illumines" every other subject to be treated. Christian initiation and catechesis is a "progressive experience," a process of growth which cannot be reduced to the purely cognitive or moral dimensions of learning, but requires "the integration of every aspect of the human person within a communal journey of hearing and response" (EG 165). The catechist must therefore be attuned to the divine pedagogy,[15] which comes to meet each disciple as they are, adopting methods that adequately reflect the experience of encounter with Christ and progressive conversion. "All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental" (EG 165).

The Hierarchy of Truths and 'a Fitting Sense of Proportion'

Pope Francis identifies one of the most fundamental challenges to communicating the attractive message of the gospel today as the need for "a fitting

15 See, for example, C. Theobald, "Vatican II: Une vision d'avenir – une pédagogie de la foi – une manière de résoudre des questions particulières", *Theoforum* 44/1 (2013), 9–25.

sense of proportion" in preaching and in all pastoral activity (EG 38). "The biggest problem is when the message we preach then seems identified with those secondary aspects which, important as they are, do not in and of themselves convey the heart of Christ's message" (EG 33). He is the first Bishop of Rome since the Second Vatican Council to call for an intentional application of the "hierarchy of truths", as described by the Decree on Ecumenism (UR 11), to the preaching, catechesis and pastoral practice of the Catholic Church (EG 36, 246).[16] According to this principle, the truths of faith vary in their relationship to the foundation of the Christian faith, or to those truths pertaining to salvation in Christ and the Trinitarian communion of the divine Godhead. Only when a kerygmatic focus on the foundation of faith is maintained, he insists, can the meaning of the rich doctrinal teaching of the Church – including her moral and social teachings – be rightly understood.

> Pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed. (…) The message is simplified, while losing none of its depth and truth, and thus becomes all the more forceful and convincing. All revealed truths derive from the same divine source and are to be believed with the same faith, yet some of them are more important for giving direct expression to the heart of the Gospel. In this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead (EG 35–36).

Without wanting to set aside any of the rich heritage of the Church's teaching and tradition, Pope Francis nonetheless calls upon those charged with preaching and faith formation, and indeed all the baptized who are called to be "Spirit-filled evangelizers", to ensure that "the integrity of the Gospel message

16 Second Vatican Council, "Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*", 11: <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014). This principle has until now been invoked mainly in reference to the practice of ecumenical dialogue and to the understanding of hermeneutics required in ecumenical formation. See my examination of the reception of this teaching "L'herméneutique d'un principe herméneutique: La hiérarchie des vérités", G. Routhier, G. Jobin (eds.), *L'autorité des autorités : L'herméneutique théologique de Vatican II*. (Paris: Cerf, 2010), 69–91. This study is indebted to the work of H. Witte, "Vatikanum II Revisited: Kontext und Enstehung der Aussage über die 'Hierarchie' der Wahrheiten'", *Bijdragen: International Journal in Philosophy and Theology* 68(2007), 445–477.

… not be deformed". "Each truth", he observes, "is better understood when related to the harmonious totality of the Christian message" (EG 39).

Christ Summons the Church to Continual Reformation

At the same time, Francis recognizes, as did Pope John XXIII in his opening speech to the bishops gathered at Vatican II, that in a context of rapid social and cultural change, the language and form of church teaching need to be adapted in order that the message, the perennial deposit of faith, might be more adequately expressed to contemporary people. He warns that even the well-meaning faithful can be led astray when they confuse form and substance, or when the form no longer succeeds in conveying the intended message.

> There are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another. With the holy intent of communicating the truth about God and humanity, we sometimes give them a false god or a human ideal which is not really Christian. In this way, we hold fast to a formulation while failing to convey its substance. This is the greatest danger (EG 41).

Thus, "a fitting sense of proportion" extends to the language of the Church's teaching, preaching, and catechesis. The expression of doctrine itself must be renewed in order to communicate the truth of faith with greater effect.[17] This discussion is somewhat reminiscent of the Decree on Ecumenism's recognition of the need for "continual reformation" in the life of the Catholic Church: "Thus if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or *even in the way that church teaching has been formulated* to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself – these can and should be set right at the opportune moment" (*Unitatis*

17 Here *Evangelii gaudium* cites John Paul II's *Ut unum sint*, par. 19: "the expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning". The entire discussion is an unfolding of the principle laid out in the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, article 6: "Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth. The Church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of men here on earth. Thus if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated – to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself – these can and should be set right at the opportune moment".

redintegratio 6; emphasis mine). *Evangelii gaudium* invites consideration of where the expression of church teaching stands in need of such a reformation or reformulation today.

Similarly, we are invited to re-examine the many customs, rules, and disciplinary precepts of the Church to ask whether they continue to communicate the gospel effectively. Some may simply have outlived their original purpose. As a criterion for discernment Pope Francis proposes a principle of moderation: "Saint Thomas Aquinas pointed out that the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God 'are very few'". Citing Saint Augustine, he noted that the precepts subsequently enjoined by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation "so as not to burden the lives of the faithful" and make our religion a form of servitude, whereas "God's mercy has willed that we should be free" (EG 43). The way of Christian discipleship is not a heavy burden (1 Jn 5:3). The most effective teaching, customs, and precepts of the Church are not those imposed by an external authority, but rather those that speak to the inner dynamism toward truth and goodness within human persons, who elect freely to set out on this path knowing that it will lead to a fuller and more authentic life.

In these few lines we might discover a clue to the orientation that Pope Francis has given to the discernment of the Church's pastoral care of Christian families in the context of the synodal process presently underway. Without questioning the substance of the Church's conviction regarding the indissolubility of Christian marriage, he has opened a space for reflecting together on whether the present expression of the Church's teaching, canonical procedures, and pastoral practice adequately respond to the needs of those entering into the covenantal commitment of marriage and family life today, or to those many sincere Catholics whose marriages are irreparably broken. We may rightly ask whether the Church's teaching and pastoral practice convey an adequate appreciation of the complexity of marriage and human sexuality to the world of contemporary culture. Do they adequately succeed in bringing men and women into contact with the merciful love of God, of which Christian marriage and family life are to be a sign?

3 Discerning the Movement of God's Spirit for a Spiritual Conversion of the Church

Shortly after his election, Pope Francis was asked what it meant for him as a Jesuit to be called to serve the Church as the Bishop of Rome and what aspect of Ignatian spirituality might help him to live this ministry. He replied

immediately, "Discernment. (…) Discernment in the Lord guides me in my way of governing".[18] It is against the horizon of the spiritual gifts that we have explored above, in particular those of love, joy, mercy, and in light of the centrality of personal encounter with Christ in the Holy Spirit, that *Evangelii gaudium* turns to reflect upon the need for spiritual conversion within the life of the Church. Again, the tone is set and the necessity for discernment is identified from the very outset. Pope Francis observes:

> Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God's will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ (EG 2).

In a chapter dedicated to the "crises of communal commitment" Pope Francis describes a number of challenges in contemporary culture and, within this context, the temptations faced by pastoral workers in the Church. In a world where the role of civil government in service of the common good is severely challenged, where the values of the market dominate and a dehumanizing system serves the interest of a few and breeds outrageous poverty and social inequity, those called to service in the Church are tempted to place their own comfort and self-interest above that of others. In effect, their comportment spawns unjust structures within the Church that neglect genuine pastoral needs, in particular, the spiritual needs of the poor. Pope Francis deplores the fact that "the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care" and calls every Catholic to translate the Church's preferential option of the poor into concrete action (EG 200).

He recognizes that when faced by the challenges of secularization and undifferentiated religious pluralism, pastoral workers – be they religious, lay, or ordained – often prefer to retreat into themselves. Tempted to despair, they fall prey to what Pope Francis aptly calls "pastoral acedia" (EG 81–82). Despondent, their evangelical fervour is stifled by "defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists". Instead of radiating gospel joy their faces are those of "sourpusses" (EG 85). They tragically lose touch with the lives of those

18 A. Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God", *America* (30 September 2014): <http://www.americamagazine.org.print.156341> (Accessed 20 December 2014).

whom they are called to serve, having become blind or indifferent to the needs of others, especially the poor.

Pope Francis reserves his fiercest critique for the condition that he has dubbed "spiritual worldliness" – a theme he returns to with some frequency – most recently in his Christmas Address to the members of the Roman Curia.[19] Spiritual worldliness is a subtle malady of the self-absorbed parading behind "the appearance of piety and even love for the Church" (EG 93). A self-referential church, Francis is fond of repeating, is sick; it has developed a false notion of mission and identity. He observes that among those who remain entrenched in a "Catholic style from the past … a supposed soundness of doctrine or discipline leads instead to a narcissistic and authoritarian elitism, whereby instead of evangelizing, one analyses and classifies others, and instead of opening the door to grace, one exhausts his or her energies in inspecting and verifying" (EG 94). Their concern is neither for Jesus nor those whom they serve. This same malady manifests itself in "an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige". It is equally reflected through a certain "pride in [the] ability to manage practical affairs, or an obsession with programs of self-help and self-realization" (EG 95). A careful reading of these few paragraphs should give us to understand that Francis is not simply targeting groups on the right or left: none are immune from the temptation of self-righteousness and complacency. The worst manifestations of spiritual worldliness are found in the air of superiority or elitism that lead one to dismiss the views of those who differ, or to abandon and neglect those in need of healing and mercy. Such persons have ceased to recognize the face of Christ in others.

> Those who have fallen into this worldliness look on from above and afar, they reject the prophecy of their brothers and sisters, they discredit those who raise questions, they constantly point out the mistakes of others and they are obsessed by appearances. Their hearts are open only to the limited horizon of their own immanence and interests, and as a consequence they neither learn from their sins nor are they genuinely open to forgiveness. This is a tremendous corruption disguised as a good (EG 97).

19 Pope Francis, "Presentation of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia" (December 22, 2014): <http: //w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141222_curia-romana.html> (Accessed 30 December 2014). Francis has spoken often of this challenge, beginning with a letter addressed to the Plenary Assembly of the Argentinian Conference of Bishops, 25 March, 2013. See: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/letters/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130325_lettera-vescovi-argentina.html> (Accessed 18 December 2014).

Spiritual Blindness, Unauthentic Traditions, and Conversion

Pope Francis considers these variously self-absorbed comportments, in their social and structural consequences, "adulterated forms of Christianity" (EG 94). They have become structural or habitual obstacles to the proclamation of the kerygmatic heart of the gospel and prevent the Church from leading others to the joy of encountering the merciful love of Christ. In his incisive commentary on the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution of Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, Joseph Ratzinger once observed that while the council succeeded in placing the person of Christ at the heart of its proclamation, it missed an opportunity to acknowledge the possibility of real distortions entering into tradition itself.[20] In a similar vein, Bernard Lonergan, when discussing the dialectical processes that contribute to the ongoing self-constitution of the Church, identifies one of the important tasks for theology as the discernment of "unauthentic traditions" – self-perpetuating expressions of faith that have become detached from their origins in the love of Christ (Rom 5:5).[21] He contends that the effects of unauthentic traditions can only be overcome by engaging in the intentional operations required to bring about genuine conversion. A return to Christ and to the central message of the scriptures is key to discerning the inevitable dissonance between the call of the gospel and the reality of the Church's life and witness.

Evangelii gaudium might be seen as a reflection that is engaged in, and providing the impetus for, just such a discernment. It calls for the conversion of these inauthentic attitudes and traditions through a return to a focus on Jesus Christ and on the poor – to the heart of the Gospel: "God save us from a worldly Church with superficial spiritual and pastoral trappings! This stifling worldliness can only be healed by breathing in the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God" (EG 97). The reader may be taken aback by the intensity of Pope Francis's critique, particularly when he repeats the ominous words of John XXIII's historic speech inaugurating the Second Vatican Council:

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20 "We shall have to acknowledge the truth of the criticism that there is, in fact, no explicit mention of the possibility of a distorting tradition and of the place of Scripture as an element within the Church that is *also* critical of tradition …" J. Ratzinger, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, chapter II", H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), III, 192–193.

21 "[T]radition may be unauthentic. It may consist in a watering-down of the original message, in recasting it into terms and convictions of those who have dodged the issue of radical conversion". B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 162; see also 80 and 299. [Original version, Herder and Herder, 1972].

> At times we have to listen, much to our regret, to the voices of people who, though burning with zeal, lack a sense of discretion and measure. In this modern age they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin … We feel that we must disagree with those prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand. In our times, divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by human effort and even beyond all expectations, are directed to the fulfilment of God's superior and inscrutable designs, in which everything, even human setbacks, leads to the greater good of the Church (EG 84).[22]

One might recognize in Pope Francis's teaching an echo of John XXIII's invitation to read the signs of the times. When the Pharisees came to Jesus asking for a dramatic indication of God's work in the world, he rebuked them for failing to recognize in his daily teaching and healing ministry the many signs that God was well and truly present and active in history (Matt 16: 1–4). In our own day, some have come to interpret the notion of the "signs of the times" in overly negative and apocalyptic terms. Contemporary prophets of doom see the sky falling all around and are blind to the healing presence of Christ in moments of quiet authenticity in the movements of human history and in human interactions, where simple acts of loving presence, forgiveness, and mercy are at work to heal and reverse the wounds of sin and alienation.

The great tragedy, as Pope Francis seems to indicate, is that many who hold important responsibilities around the Bishop of Rome are deaf to the still small voice of God in history. The very seeds of the kingdom are found in the fragile lives of the poor and the ordinary as they seek the face of God. The drama of our predicament is that many of those to whom Pope Francis must now entrust the work of discernment and reform suffer from spiritual blindness and may not yet have the capacity to recognize the unfailing signs of hope around them. Viewed in this light, spiritual conversion might be considered a greater priority than institutional reform.[23] Yet spiritual conversion cannot be dissociated from the reform of ecclesial structures. Although the former precedes the latter, the movement of God's Spirit shapes and reshapes the concrete

22 Citing John XXIII, "Address for the Opening of the Second Vatican Council (11 October 1962)", *AAS* 54 (1962), 789.

23 In his interview with Elisabetta Piqué, Pope Francis indicated that "spiritual reform, the reform of the heart" was a principal concern, with reference to his upcoming Christmas message to the members of the Roman Curia on December 22, 2014. "God has Bestowed on Me a Healthy Dose".

lives of the faithful both as individual persons and as a community. Indeed, without clarity of spiritual vision any attempt to renew the structures of the Church will fall flat. Without liberation from the spiritual blindness that Pope Francis has described, one risks perpetuating unauthentic traditions, substituting empty observance and doctrinaire solutions for slow and steady progress along the fragile path of authentic human existence – the only path to holiness open to us.

The 'pastoral' character of the Second Vatican Council outlined by Pope John XXIII consisted in the effort to reformulate the expression of church doctrine, to reform the liturgy and church structures so that they might faithfully proclaim the message of the gospel to men and women of the late twentieth century. The principal mode for the Church's proclamation was to be dialogue with contemporary culture and society. As Lonergan describes the conciliar vision, the Church's communication of the gospel must employ the language and culture of the receivers "so that the Christian message becomes, not disruptive of the culture, not an alien patch superimposed upon it, but a line of development within the culture".[24] His reflection on the pastoral nature of the Council enables us to understand the priority of the kerygma in that dialogical engagement and the relative role of doctrine in communicating the good news.

> But if one first clarifies the meaning of 'doctrine' and then sets about explaining the meaning of 'pastoral', one tends to reduce 'pastoral' to the application of 'doctrine' and to reduce the application of 'doctrine' to the devices and dodges, the simplifications and elaborations of classical oratory. But what comes first is the word of God. The task of the Church is the kerygma, announcing the good news, preaching the gospel. That preaching is pastoral. It is the concrete reality. From it one may extract doctrines, and theologians may work the doctrines into conceptual systems. But the doctrines and systems, however valuable and true, are but the skeleton of the original message. A word is the word of a person, but doctrine objectifies and depersonalizes. The word of God comes to us through the God-man. The Church has to mediate to the world not just a doctrine but the living Christ.[25]

24 Lonergan, *Method*, 362.

25 B. Lonergan, "Pope John's Intention", F. Crowe (ed.), *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan.* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1985), 224–238, at 227–228. For much of this discussion, Lonergan is inspired by M.-D. Chenu, "Un concile pastoral", M.-D. Chenu, *La Parole de Dieu, II: L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 655–672. On the pastoral character

Pope Francis's call for the pastoral and missionary conversion of the Church is very much in line with the pastoral intention that informed the Second Vatican Council. It must be seen as an invitation to carry forward the central orientations of the council's vision and teaching in our time.

4 The Pastoral and Missionary Conversion of Ecclesial Structures

Against the horizon of spiritual conversion and the priority of the kerygma in the communication of the Christian message, we now turn our attention to the pastoral and missionary conversion of church structures and practices required in view of the over-arching aim of Pope Francis's exhortation: a new evangelization. The missionary nature of the Church is to be the guiding principle for this renewal, which, he insists, cannot be deferred:

> I dream of a 'missionary option', that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with him (EG 27).

Profoundly conscious that the Church is a human community moving – with the help of God's Spirit – toward an eschatological horizon, Pope Francis prefers the image of the Church as the pilgrim people of God over that of a hierarchical institution. "She is certainly a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary" (EG 111).

The image of the Church as people of God inspires an eschatological humility that enables us to consider institutional structures, customs, and practices in their proper perspective.[26] Structures, customs, pastoral and canonical

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of the council, see also C. Théobald, "Enjeux herméneutiques des débats sur l'histoire du concile Vatican II", *Cristianessimo nella storia* 28/2 (2007), 359–380.

26 I am indebted to Richard R. Gaillardetz for this expression, which he often uses to characterize the pilgrim nature of the Church in history. E.g.: *The Church in the Making* (New York: Paulist, 2006), 56.

norms exist to lead us to an encounter with the living Christ. A kerygmatic focus helps us to understand that increasing church demographics is not the immediate goal of evangelization.[27] The Christian community undertakes a mission of proclamation and service without concern for its own survival. The way of the gospel is a way of self-forgetfulness and self-giving love, not of self-interest. The Church is not a closed community of the elite, but is willing to risk all, to live in a culture of encounter with others, ready to learn and deepen its comprehension of the very message it wishes to proclaim. "It never closes itself off, never retreats into its own security, never opts for rigidity and defensiveness. It realizes that it has to grow in its own understanding of the Gospel and in discerning the paths of the Spirit, and so it always does what good it can, even if in the process, its shoes get soiled by the mud of the street" (EG 45). The Church is not a human project, but a response to the work of God in us. "The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that 'he has loved us first' (1 Jn 4:19) and that he alone 'gives the growth' (1 Cor 3:7)" (EG 12). With this confidence, Pope Francis invites us to re-examine the extent to which ecclesial structures at every level serve or inhibit missionary outreach, which is *paradigmatic of all the Church's activity*" (EG 15; italics in the original).

Conversion of the Local Church

Evangelii gaudium envisions every parish community as a centre of "constant missionary outreach" where all activities are aimed at forming true 'evangelizers', men and women whose lives speak to others of the love of God. Parishes ought not to become a haven for the self-absorbed, but are to be in close contact with the genuine lives and concerns of their members, discerning where and how the gifts of the community might be placed at the service of others. Living in a world dominated by the economic metaphors of production and growth, we may be tempted to measure the 'success' of parish pastoral ministry by the number of people in the pews, by the number of baptisms, confirmations, and marriages, or by weekly revenues. According to the principles that Pope Francis has laid out, these are 'worldly' measures of success and not the true measure of divine grace. He invites us to ask instead, have the poor and the wounded found a home here? Are the members of this community being formed to be the "spirit-filled evangelizers" that the world needs? Is this community fully engaged in serving the needs of the poor and broken in the wider

27 In this regard, Pope Francis has often repeated that "it is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but "by attraction". See *Evangelii gaudium*, 14, where he cites Pope Benedict XVI, "Homily at Mass for the Opening of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (13 May 2007), Aparecida, Brazil", *AAS* 99 (2007), 437.

neighbourhood? Is this parish a place that radiates the joy and mercy of the gospel? Francis has sometimes used the image of the Church as a field hospital to speak about its outward engagement.[28] The Church is not the front line, the ultimate object of parish ministry. It is a centre of healing and support, equipping the faithful for the daily struggle of life and witness.

Pope Francis frankly acknowledges that efforts of renewal have not yet succeeded in creating parishes that are "environments of living communion and participation" (EG 28) where the gifts and insights of the lay faithful are nourished and welcomed as a valuable contribution to the Church's missional activity. One might also ask whether parish and diocesan structures provide sufficient formation in the habits of dialogue and discernment needed to live as mature adult Christians within the complex context of contemporary culture. Within each diocese bishops are exhorted to develop the necessary processes and structures for ongoing communal discernment. Where diocesan and parish pastoral councils have been poorly implemented, the laity have little experience of co-responsibility for the mission of the Church, and their pastors cannot reliably discern the true pastoral needs and priorities of those entrusted to their care.

Pope Francis calls upon all members of each local church "to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities". He warns that any "proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory" (EG 33). The pastoral discernment envisioned here is not to be undertaken in isolation, but in a mutually supportive community and in the set of synergetic relations that characterize genuine ecclesial communion. The bishop, whose task is "to foster this missionary communion", must know when to lead and when to walk in the midst of his people. He has a particular responsibility to develop the structures of dialogue and participation in the Church, not merely for the sake of organizational efficiency or expediency, but with "the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone" (EG 31). In his own ministry of service and pastoral discernment, the bishop must be one who listens – not only to those who share his views and tell him what he wants to hear – excluding no one from his concern.

If this call for conversion is to truly take effect, a wide ranging effort of spiritual and pastoral formation will be needed to uproot the deep seated attitudes of clericalism and passivity that are so much a part of the contemporary Catholic ethos. Pope Francis's diagnosis of 'pastoral acedia' is most apt in this regard. Acedia is an infectious malady. Its remedy, in the tradition of the

28 A. Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God", *America* (September 30, 2013), 7.

Church fathers, is a return to the word of God and compunction in the awareness of how far we have strayed from God's desire. True compunction is a sign that God's word has pierced and softened our hearts. With genuine humility our sorrow turns to compassion and the joy of knowing God's forgiveness and healing love. In some contexts, true pastoral conversion will require public and communal exercises of discernment and repentance. Some communities have been chastened by the scandal of sexual abuse which has revealed, at times painfully, the lack of authenticity not only on the part of individual offenders, but more pointedly in a culture of silence and false deference toward the clergy, in a practice of ministry that neglects the most vulnerable, and in a misguided exercise of church governance and canonical discipline. This is but one example of where customs, practices and an overall ecclesial culture have failed to serve the gospel. Only a humble and authentic communal examination and repentance can lead a community to recognize where it stands in need of the grace of collective conversion.

Conversion of Regional Structures: Toward Genuine Collegiality

Evangelii gaudium admits the necessity of re-examining the status of the regional and national conferences of bishops as part of a broader project for the pastoral conversion of the papacy. Recalling the invitation issued by Pope John Paul II, in his 1995 encyclical letter on Commitment to Ecumenism, *Ut unum sint*, to seek together "a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation",[29] Pope Francis concedes, "we have made little progress in this regard" (EG 32). As part of advancing along the path of a truly pastoral renewal of the papal office, he invites a reconsideration of the status of the episcopal conferences. The role of the latter was greatly circumscribed by the 1998 Apostolic Letter of John Paul II, *Apostolos suos*, which was widely experienced as an effort to centralize the governance of the local churches, reversing a process of devolution begun by the Second Vatican Council with its affirmation of the collegial exercise of the episcopal office.[30] In theological circles, some questioned the contention of *Apostolos suos* that a genuine exercise of collegi-

29 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism, *Ut unum sint* (25 May 1995), no. 95: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html>. Cited in EG 32 (Accessed 18 December 2014).

30 John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter issued 'Motu Proprio' on the Juridical and Theological Nature of the Episcopal Conferences [*Apostolos suos*]": <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_jp-ii_motu-proprio_22071998_apostolos-suos.html> (Accessed 18 December 2014).

ality could not be ascribed to the regional gatherings of bishops. It posited that an 'effective' collegiality properly belongs only to the entire college of bishops, with and under the Bishop of Rome.[31]

In contrast, Pope Francis now notes that the attribution of a genuine doctrinal authority belonging to the bishops when they exercise their pastoral teaching office through the means of an episcopal conference "has not yet been sufficiently elaborated". Further, he affirms, "Excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach" (EG 32). An overly centralized system of governance can diminish the responsiveness of the bishops' conferences and of the bishops in their particular churches, who, because of their proximity to the people in their care, are best equipped to discern what is needed. In hindsight, Pope John Paul II's attempt to 'rein in' episcopal conferences in the hope of attaining a more unified witness may have been comprehensible in the turbulent period of the late twentieth century that witnessed an unprecedented expansion of the global Catholic Church. The Catholic Church of the twenty-first century is the most populous and diverse global Christian community the world has ever known. The election of a Latin American pope is itself a sign of the coming of age of a world church whose centre of gravity has now moved to the southern hemisphere. Francis has recognized instinctively, and no doubt from his concrete experience as an archbishop from the global south, that the centre will not hold if there is not adequate freedom for the local churches in all of their diversity to discern the forms and structures of life best suited for the enculturation of the Christian message in their context.

The bishops' conferences in the various regions were among of the principal structures established by the Second Vatican Council to give shape to the collegial exercise of the episcopal office.[32] Pope Francis affirms the need for further development in this area. When he speaks of how much the Catholic Church can stand to learn from and receive from the insights and practices of other Christian churches, he pointedly cites the example of collegiality and synodality modelled by the Eastern Orthodox Churches (EG 246). North American Catholics have witnessed a continuous downsizing of the structures and budgets of the episcopal conferences in recent years. While this reflects a genuine decline in available resources, it has sometimes been justified in the name of the ecclesiology contained in *Apostolos Suos*. If today a serious devo-

31 John Paul II, *Apostolos suos*, especially nos. 10–14.

32 Second Vatican Council, "Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishop, *Christus Dominus*", nos. 5 and 36.

lution of discernment and decision-making is really in the cards, then bishops may need to reconsider the importance of strong national structures and the pooling of material and personnel resources to carry out new tasks and equip the Church for mission in a changing context.

Perhaps the most neglected of the synodal structures envisioned by the renewal of the Second Vatican Council was the restoration of provincial councils.[33] To my knowledge, only two of these have been held in the past fifty years (in India and the Philippines). This omission is most regrettable, especially in areas where many individual dioceses are challenged by limited resources. Provincial councils might provide an important opportunity for a pooling of resources and for the particular churches of a given region to support one another in the process of discerning the pastoral mission of the Church in our time. The American ecclesiologist Francis A. Sullivan has recently suggested that a restoration of provincial councils might come to play an important role in the nomination of bishops, a function that many desire to see devolve to more regionally or locally based instances of authority and discernment.[34]

The final structure envisioned by Vatican II as an expression of the co-responsibility of the episcopal college in the governance of the universal church is the ordinary Synod of Bishops.[35] In his leadership of the two synods that have focussed on the call of the Christian family in the contemporary world, Pope Francis has shown a desire to see the synod function as a space for genuine dialogue and discernment. He made it clear from the outset of the 2014 synod that he considers "speaking honestly … with *parrhesia*" – candidly and without holding back – and listening with humility, the two fundamental pre-conditions for the practice of synodality.[36] In planning for two successive synodal gatherings to reflect on the same pastoral concern, Pope Francis is also demonstrating that discernment is a process. It takes time. Genuine pastoral conversion cannot be satisfied with the perfunctory application of pre-cooked responses to the complex realities of peoples' lives. Through the experience of

33 Second Vatican Council, "*Christus Dominus*", no. 36.

34 For a solid reflection on the history of provincial councils and their potential role in the present context, see F.A. Sullivan, "Provincial Councils and the Choosing of Priests for Appointment as Bishops", *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), 872–883.

35 Second Vatican Council, *Christus Dominus*, no. 36. The international synod of bishops was in fact established by Pope Paul VI, prior to the promulgation of this conciliar text. Paul VI, "Motu Proprio *Apostolica Sollicitudo* (15 September 1965)": <http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19650915_apostolica-sollicitudo.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014).

36 Pope Francis, "Greeting to the Synod Fathers".

honest and transparent dialogue, the bishops can come to understand more deeply that the pastoral challenges of Christians in one cultural context may differ greatly from those experienced by the people of God in another. They are more likely to come to an appreciation of the need, in the diversity of today's church, for a more differentiated pastoral response and of the inadequacy of uniform solutions. Such understanding and respect will be vital to grounding the genuine bonds of communion among the local churches, and to envisioning a pastoral response appropriate to the complexities of family life in today's cultural context.

One hopes that the synod will continue to evolve from an instrument of occasional consultation to a more permanent body that can offer advice in an ongoing manner on how best to respond to a wide range of questions as they arise. A genuine synod would also be much more of a deliberative body than we have known since Vatican II. Pope Francis took pains to ensure that the voting of the October 2013 synod on the family be published.[37] Will he consider himself bound by the voting patterns of the bishops as the synodal process moves forward? This would be consistent with his experience as a superior in the context of a religious order where the counsel emerging from consultative processes is understood to have a binding effect. It would also mark a move toward a synod with a more deliberative character.

The Pastoral Conversion of the Papacy

In his personal style and in the many reforming initiatives that he has undertaken Pope Francis has demonstrated an unambiguous desire to give shape to a substantially different exercise of the pastoral teaching office by the Bishop of Rome. He has sought to simplify the ceremonial, to live in greater simplicity and proximity to those with whom he serves. By being more accessible to the press corps, giving extended interviews to some, he has shown a preference for direct and personal conversation over the formality of prepared texts and theological discourse. His actions belie a consistent commitment to go out to the poor, from the refugees of Lampedusa to the homeless victims of typhoon Haiyan and the homeless on the gates of the Vatican City.

Much of Francis's attention over the first two years of his pontificate has been consumed by the reform of structures of the Roman Curia, including those for the oversight and administration of Vatican finances and the various

37 See the official press release, a Latin version: <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/18/0770/03044.html> (Accessed 18 December 2014). The English translation of the final *relatio* at the Vatican web site does not list the votes.

dicasteries that exist to assist the Pope and the bishops in the governance of the universal church. In *Evangelii gaudium*, he admits without hesitation that "the papacy and the central structures of the universal Church also need to hear the call to pastoral conversion" (EG 32). While it is widely expected that a substantial revision of the Roman dicasteries will be announced in the near future, Pope Francis and his advisors have already given important indications of what can be expected: fewer prelates, more members of the laity and women in key offices; improved international representation, clearer limits on terms of office; the amalgamation and streamlining of offices with overlapping concern (e.g. the Pontifical Councils for Justice and Peace and for the Pastoral Care of Migrants; Social Communications, Vatican Radio and *L'Osservatore Romano*). New offices may be established to reflect the pastoral priorities of the present day. This reform is aimed not simply at streamlining the Vatican bureaucracy. It also seeks to address a deep-seated papal-centric culture that has become more self-serving than mission oriented. As one of the Pope's advisors intimated, "There is a longing for a curia that encourages the new evangelization and acts as a body to serve the Pope and the dioceses, not as a control centre".[38]

The C9: An Ad Hoc Committee with No Future?

To help him in this reforming task, Francis has established a new structure, an advisory council composed of nine cardinals chosen to represent the continental groups of bishops and the Eastern Catholic Churches. The members of the so-called 'C9' have carried out, in turn, a wide consultation of the bishops in each region. They have been meeting at a rate of about once every three months. While Pope Francis has also carried out a wide-ranging consultation of the members of the curia concerning this reform, by taking his cues principally from the bishops, he is attempting to arrive at a set of structures that will best serve the missional needs of the local churches, the communion over which he presides. The agenda is not being set by the apparatus, but by the concrete pastoral needs and priorities of the particular churches.

It is worth asking Pope Francis and the members of the C9 whether they envision this group as an ad hoc initiative or whether they see it becoming a permanent structure. Will it outlive this extraordinary moment of discernment and structural reform? Might it come to serve as a permanent body that links the Bishop of Rome to the continental groups of bishops in a more sustained

38 A. Mettali, "Reform is Going to Go Deep", *The Vatican Insider – La Stampa* (29 October 2013): <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/the-vatican/detail/articolo/curia-riforma-papa-el-papa-pope-francisco-javier-errazuriz-ossa-29115/> (Accessed 18 December 2014).

and direct manner than the international synod or some other body within the curia (e.g.: the Congregation for Bishops)? Since 1978, the Archbishops of Canterbury have met regularly with the presiding bishops or Primates to reflect on matters of common concern and to strengthen of the bonds of communion among the various provinces of the Anglican Communion. Might the C9 evolve into a kind of Catholic 'Primates' Meeting'?

Pope Francis seems to be drawn instinctively toward unmediated contact with the bishops, one unencumbered by a curial office functioning, however unwittingly, as a *tertium quid* between himself and the leaders of the local churches. A number of studies in recent decades have called for the strengthening of continental bodies, even envisioning the development of new continental 'patriarchates' adapted after the model of the early church. They suggest that new continental structures might embody the kind of devolution required by the reform of the papacy, and serve the inevitable diversification needed for a fuller enculturation of the gospel.[39] Further, they insist, such a reform must also be accompanied by a clarification and differentiation of the various functions of the Bishop of Rome as bishop in the local Church of Rome, Patriarch of the Western Church,[40] and Primate of the universal church. A permanent group of cardinals or primates might provide a forum for dialogue and consultation between the Pope and the continental groups of bishops. Should a permanent structure such as the group of eight cardinals be deemed desirable, it would be important to delineate clearly its terms of reference and the criteria for the appointment of its members. At this juncture, the C9 remains a hand-picked body of cardinals, an instrument of the papacy. Were the criteria of selection or even election from among the leadership of the bishops' conferences to be made more transparent, such a group might also come to be

39 See, for example, Groupe des Dombes, *Le ministère de communion dans l'Église universelle* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1986), no. 144; J. Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes: Entwurfe zur Ekklesiologie* (Dusseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1969), 121ff; H. Pottmeyer, "Primacy in Communion: What Must Happen for a Centrist Papacy to become a Primacy in Communion?", *America* (June 22–10, 2000), 17.

40 In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI dropped this title from among those listed in the *Annuario Pontificio* as he considered it "obselete". It is regrettable that he preferred to abandon this title, missing an opportunity to clarify the role and the various functions of the papal office – a matter of great ecumenical significance, as indicated by Orthodox reactions. Cardinal Walter Kasper provided an explication for Pope Benedict's decision in, "Press Release Regarding the Suppression of the Title 'Patriarch of the West' in the *Annuario Pontificio*": <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/general-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20060322_patriarca-occidente_fr.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014).

recognized as having a truly representative character in relation to the continental groups of bishops and their churches.

Reform of the College of Cardinals

Somewhat surprisingly, *Evangelii gaudium* makes no reference to the challenge posed to the College of Cardinals, a body whose medieval origins point to its principal function as a college of electors. In the history of the Church, no group is more notoriously emblematic of spiritual worldliness than these ecclesiastical princes. If Pope Francis is serious about combatting spiritual worldliness, then perhaps he will do us the favour of abolishing once and for all the obsolete and inappropriate title 'princes', which can still be found in some of the official documentation pertaining to this office. He often affirms that ecclesiastical office is to be understood primarily as a call to service, insisting that the episcopate is no place for those who have the "mindset of princes".[41]

Francis has not refrained from appointing a number of men to the cardinalate as a dignity or honour in recognition of their accomplishments. The example of last year's appointment of the 99 year old Bishop Loris Capovilla, former personal secretary to Pope John XXIII comes to mind. During the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, three major theologians were named to the College of Cardinals late in life (Henri de Lubac, Avery Dulles and Yves Congar). With respect, and in view of a genuine and theologically consistent pastoral reform, it must be asked whether there is not a more appropriate manner of recognizing the important contributions of members of the Church that would not entail the bestowal of ecclesiastical office? Even though these nominations were made with the very best of intentions, they betray a most unfortunate theological ambivalence. The practice of honorary appointments belies a confusion of priorities and reflects an incongruity that is both theological and pastoral. These may seem like harmless and insignificant examples. Yet they

41 In June 2013, in an address to a gathering of papal nuncios, Pope Francis warned against appointing as bishops men who have "the mindset of princes". In this document, he attributes his notion of spiritual worldliness to Henri de Lubac. *Méditation sur l'Église* (1952). "Address of Pope Francis to Participants in the Papal Representatives Days (June 21, 2013)": <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130621_rappresentanti-pontifici.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014). Another problematic practice, from an ecclesiological perspective, is the continuing practice of appointing "titular" bishops. While Pope Francis's intention to reduce the number of curial officials that hold the office of bishop is most welcome, he has not yet shown a comprehension of the serious contradiction between his theology of ministry as service, and the existence of "pastors" without a flesh and blood community over which to preside. A truly pastoral conversion of the episcopal office would require an end to such appointments.

are highly symbolic of the confusing set of roles and expectations that have accrued to the office of cardinal through the centuries, virtually unchecked.

In his thoughtful response to Pope John Paul II's invitation to dialogue on the reform of the papacy, Archbishop John Quinn devotes an entire chapter to a reflection on the necessity for a reform of the College of Cardinals. He is especially concerned that its role expanded greatly under Pope John Paul II, who increased the frequency of consistories and thereby enhanced its role in church governance. According to Quinn, the fundamental problem posed by the College of Cardinals is that it functions as a college within a college "in a sense making the rest of the college of bishops a body of second rank".[42] He observes further that the expansion of the consultative role of the consistory of cardinals threatens to undermine the role of the international synod of bishops and impede its full flourishing. As if to confirm the concerns expressed by Quinn, Pope Benedict took to referring frequently to the cardinals as the 'senate of the Church', a juridical term adopted from the structures of the Roman Empire and deliberately abandoned by the 1983 Code of Canon Law (CIC 230).[43] The unintended effect of these developments has been the emergence of "a kind of bicameral structure".[44] These are serious concerns and most worthy of consideration in the present context.

Of the three structures under consideration here, the relationship of the college of cardinals to the local churches is the least obvious. This derives from the lack of clear consideration of representativity in the criteria for the selection of cardinals, and secondly, from the inordinate number of 'titular' bishops who belong to the college of cardinals, many of them heads of the various offices of the Roman curia. While many members of the College undoubtedly carry out important responsibilities on various advisory commissions, they often appear as a coterie of hand-picked 'party men'. According to the Code of Canon Law, the pope chooses men for this office who are "outstanding in doctrine, morals, piety, and prudence in action" (CIC 351, §1). Traditionally, the Archbishops of primatial, metropolitan, and historically significant churches have been appointed to the cardinalate, but even this principle finds no echo in the canons.

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42 J.R. Quinn. *The Reform of the Papacy: The Call to Costly Unity* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 143.

43 See, for example, Benedict XVI, "Homily, Ordinary Public Consistory for the Creation of New Cardinals, 25 November 2007": <http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20071125_anello-cardinalizio_en.html> (Accessed 20 December 2014).

44 Quinn, *Reform of the Papacy*, 150.

In his recent appointment of new cardinals, Pope Francis does not appear bound by convention. He has made a number of innovative appointments of Archbishops from some of the poorest and most under-represented constituencies of the Church. His instincts here may suggest the need for more comprehensive and transparent terms of reference for such appointments, so that a greater balance might be achieved. Ideally, a college of electors should faithfully represent the diversity of the local churches.

A comprehensive reform of the collegial structures that serve the universal church would see the College of Cardinals return to its principal mission as a college of electors, responsible for electing the bishops of Rome. It would have less of a governing role, avoiding the impression of a 'bicameral' structure, or of the College of Cardinals usurping a role that belongs properly to the international synod. During the Second Vatican Council, Maximos IV Saigh pleaded for the establishment of a permanent synod to assist the pope in the daily governance of the Church.[45] The inadvertent expansion of the role of the consistory might be seen as filling a void left by the absence of such a structure. In any case, it would appear to confirm the need for a more effective permanent structure to collaborate with the Bishop of Rome in the governance of the universal church. Consideration might be given to a co-ordination between a small body of continental primates and a larger, international synod of bishops made up of representatives of the conferences of bishops. As these structures continue to evolve in response to the changing needs of the global Catholic Communion, it will be important to define the mission of each and to avoid the danger of the competitive dynamic against which Archbishop John Quinn has justly cautioned.

5 Conclusion

Beginning from a consideration of the principle orientations of the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium*, I have attempted to explore in broad strokes the implications of Pope Francis's call for a pastoral and missionary conversion of the Church in our day. The purpose of such a reform is to enable the Church to return to the kerygma, to the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ. Like all Christian conversion, it must begin through spiritual renewal and encounter with Christ, and lead to the transformation of persons, communities, attitudes, customs, policies and institutions. The centrality of the kerygma, supported by a return to the study of the Word of God, and the recognition of

45 Maximos IV Saigh, "The Supreme Senate of the Catholic Church".

the gifts of God's Spirit – joy, humility, mercy, peace-making – are to be the guiding principles in a concerted effort to discern how existing ecclesial structures, customs, and practices might better proclaim the living God to men and women of our day, in particular to the poor.

I have suggested that the exercise of collective discernment that must ensue, if we heed Pope Francis's call, might be seen as an effort to discern and uproot not only the personal attitudes that prevent us from knowing and proclaiming the joy of the gospel, but also the distortions that have crept in to our practice – the unauthentic traditions which make a sham of the Church's witness and obstruct its ability to reflect the joy of Christ. Pope Francis has invited a consideration of every level of ecclesial life from the parish, to the diocese, to conferences of bishops, and the papacy itself. In the hope of contributing to the indispensable dialogue that belongs to the process of collective discernment initiated through his exhortation, I have attempted to reflect on some of the questions to be faced at each of these levels. The vision that Pope Francis sets before us is a comprehensive one. It entails nothing less than a rediscovery and deepening of the missionary nature and identity of the Church. How powerful would be the presence and service of the Church in the world, if every Christian could say, "My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an 'extra' or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We … regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing" (EG 273).

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CHAPTER 10

A New Spring for the Church: The Ecclesiological Vision of Pope Francis Emerging in *Evangelii Gaudium*

Eugene Duffy

1 Introduction: The Church as 'The People of God'

In his biography of Pope Francis, *The Great Reformer*, Austen Ivereigh claims that Jorge Bergoglio was a once-in-a-generation leader in that he combined "the political genius of a charismatic leader and the prophetic holiness of a desert saint".[1] It was indeed with prophetic clarity and forthrightness that Bergoglio named the agenda for the next papacy during the pre-conclave meetings preceding his election in March 2013 and it was something within his charismatic simplicity that appealed to his electors. From the outset, he had identified the problem of the moment as an ecclesiological one: a Church that was self-centred, self-absorbed, and lacking in evangelical zeal.

The kind of Church that he envisaged was one that would leave behind its worldliness, would opt for an energetic approach to evangelization, and one that would reform its structures to meet this challenge. His vision obviously struck a chord with the college of electors because they, like the rest of the world by then, were conscious of how dysfunctional the Vatican bureaucracy had become; a dysfunctionality that was made obvious by the resignation of Pope Benedict, who no longer had the strength to manage a situation that was getting out of control.[2] Apart from problems internal to the Vatican, the Church faced other major issues such as the fallout from the sexual abuse scandals, a growing secularism in Europe, the advance of the Pentecostal churches in Latin America, and a general fatigue in ecclesial leadership. Thus the stage was set for a pope who could recall the Church to a renewed vision of its mission and who could effect the internal renewal that would lead to its realization.

1 A. Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (London: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 357.

2 See W. Kasper, *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2015), 3.

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In what follows, I will attempt to outline and analyse the ecclesiological vision that Pope Francis has been shaping, especially in his official statements and more important interviews, as well as in his structural reforms and pastoral activity. The main focus of the essay will be on his preference for the People of God image of the Church and the pneumatology which underpins his ecclesiological vision. The practical implications of these preferences will also be considered.

In his introduction to *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis states very clearly that he wants "to discuss at length … the Church understood as the entire People of God which evangelises".[3] So, from the outset, he shows a preference for this descriptor of the Church and, interestingly, that other image of the Church as 'the Body of Christ' does not occur in the entire letter. This does not imply, however, that the Pope is using the People of God as a sociological or political term, as will be seen later, particularly in light of the appeal which he makes to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the Church. It is significant that the Pope has chosen to express a preference for this image of the Church as it connects him more immediately with the enthusiasm for ecclesial renewal that took hold immediately after Vatican II.[4] He does this even though, at the time of Vatican II, this phrase was occasionally used in a one-sided fashion, and placed in opposition to the Body of Christ image, which had been promoted by the encyclical *Mystici corporis*. However, in light of the pneumatology with which Pope Francis imbues this concept, he cannot be accused of neglecting the divine element which underpins and energizes the Church and which is central to the Body of Christ image. The People of God is still an image which can serve to elaborate and clarify the mission of the Church in a way that is probably more flexible and pastorally accessible than other images employed in formal theological discourse. Thus, the deliberate choice of this image for the Church is an invitation to probe its theological and pastoral importance for today and, in particular, to see its significance in the context of the agenda which the Pope is setting for the entire Church.

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3 *Evangelii gaudium* (henceforth EG, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html>), 17.

4 For an overview of this image of the Church and its significance in the theology of Vatican II see, W. Kasper, *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 117–126; D.J. Harrington, *The Church According to the New Testament* (Franklin, WI/Chicago: Sheed & Ward, 2001), 69–81. J. Auer and J. Ratzinger, *The Church: The Universal Sacrament of Salvation* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 67–71; H. Rikhof, *The Concept of Church: A Methodological Inquiry into the Use of Metaphors in Ecclesiology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1981), 49–55 esp.; B.C. Butler, *The Theology of Vatican II*, revised ed. (London: Longman, Darton &Todd, 1967), 62–67.

2 Inter-faith Implications

This image of the People of God has important implications for inter-faith dialogue between Jews and Christians, and for the need to recognize the privileged position of the Jewish faith and its adherents in God's plan of salvation. The Pope draws attention to this when he says:

> We hold the Jewish people in special regard because their covenant with God has never been revoked, for "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). The Church, which shares with Jews an important part of the sacred Scriptures, looks upon the people of the covenant and their faith as one of the sacred roots of her own Christian identity (cf. Rom 11:16–18). As Christians, we cannot consider Judaism as a foreign religion; nor do we include the Jews among those called to turn from idols and to serve the true God (cf. 1 Thes 1:9). With them, we believe in the one God who acts in history, and with them we accept his revealed word.[5]

Pope Francis's statement, here, is consistent with his own practice while Archbishop of Buenos Aires, where he actively promoted dialogue with the Jews. The largest Jewish diaspora community in Latin America is in Argentina, with a population in the region of 200,000, most of whom live in Buenos Aires. He held regular commemorative services in the Cathedral to remember the victims of the Shoa; he made sure that the Shoa was taught in the schools and seminaries of the diocese; he built strong relationships with a number of rabbis in the city, especially with Rabbi Abraham Skorka, with whom he conducted a year-long dialogue on the diocesan TV channel, extending over thirty hours. Bergoglio and Skorka also jointly published a series of conversations on contemporary ethical issues, including the environment and the Shoa.[6] In his assessment of their collaborative efforts, Austen Ivereigh comments:

> They wanted to develop a deeper understanding of what Jewishness means to Christianity and vice versa; if Jews were the Christians 'elder brothers' in the faith – the modern Catholic formula – what could or should that brotherhood look like. Bergoglio's focus on Jesus's identification with the poor and the marginalised recalls the prophets of Israel and

5 EG 247

6 Published as *Biblia, Diálogo Vigente* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2013).

> the Torah, says Skorka, and allowed the two Argentinians to meet constantly on shared ground.[7]

While his preferential option for the poor is without question, and is obviously shaped by the concern for justice so often articulated by the Prophets,[8] it is obvious, too, that his profound regard for the importance of Christian-Jewish dialogue is grounded in his desire to show that the Church is in continuity with the faith of Israel. He made this clear during his visit with the two Chief Rabbis of Israel in Jerusalem on May 26, 2014 when he said in his address to them:

> Mutual understanding of our spiritual heritage, appreciation for what we have in common and respect in matters on which we disagree: all these can help to guide us to a closer relationship, an intention which we put in God's hands. Together, we can make a great contribution to the cause of peace; together, we can bear witness, in this rapidly changing world, to the perennial importance of the divine plan of creation; together, we can firmly oppose every form of anti-Semitism and all other forms of discrimination.[9]

It is evident that Pope Francis is anxious to see the continuity in faith and witness between Jews and Christians, with a view to creating a world more in harmony with God's plan for his people.

3 A More Lay-centred and Enculturated Church

The People of God image takes undue emphasis off the hierarchical elements of the Church and accentuates the responsibility for the mission that belongs

7 *The Great Reformer*, 325–326.

8 John Allen has shown that it was during the economic crisis in Argentina in the 1990s that Bergoglio's friendship with Skorka developed as the religious institutions in the country were called upon to work more closely in order to assist people in need. It is this pragmatic focus, he suggests, that "is at the heart of interfaith cooperation" for the Pope and is reflected in his initiative launched in 2014 with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Grand Imam of Egypt's prestigious Al-Azhar University and Mosque to combat human trafficking (*Francis Miracle: Inside the Transformation of the Pope and the Church* (New York: Time Books, 2015), 74–76).

9 Address of Pope Francis, "Courtesy Visit to the Two Chief Rabbis of Israel, at Heichal Shlomo Center next to the Jerusalem Great Synagogue (Jerusalem) Monday, 26 May 2014", <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/may/documents/papa-francesco_20140526_terra-santa-visita-rabbini-israele.pdf> (Accessed November 14, 2015).

to all its members by virtue of their baptism. The pope is opposed to any form of clericalism which distorts the nature of the Church as a people united in their service of God's tender mercy. He says: "Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the People of God. The minority – ordained minsters – are at their service".[10] He sees their role in penetrating with Christian values the social, political, and economic sectors of life, and encourages their formation for that mission. Furthermore, room must be made for them in their local churches to carry out their mission appropriately. The mission is too broad-ranging and too important to be confined to any one group. In this context, too, he insists that the place of women in the Church must be more clearly acknowledged and expanded so that they become active contributors "where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures".[11]

This line of thinking leads him, then, to signal the importance of enculturating the Gospel among various peoples. Through enculturation, the Church "introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community", for "every culture offers positive values and forms which can enrich the way the Gospel is preached, understood and lived".[12]

The concreteness of his preferred image enables the pope to give due prominence to the task of enculturation, in line with the conciliar decree *Gaudium et spes*. He notes that Christianity does not have one cultural expression[13] and he warns that "we in the Church can sometimes fall into a needless hallowing of our own culture, and thus show more fanaticism than true evangelising zeal".[14] That statement is significant because of what it says to the Church itself about its own culture. John Paul II spoke regularly on enculturation and of the Church's responsibility for enculturating the faith,[15] but Pope Francis goes further in suggesting that the Church itself needs to be careful lest its own cultural accretions stand in the way of the Gospel reaching other peoples and their cultures. As Richard Gaillardetz has pointed out, in the past the rhetoric often stood at odds with Vatican policy which seemed to treat the business of enculturating faith and theology with suspicion.[16] This can be seen in the difficulties regarding the reception of the new translations of the Roman Missal, espe-

10 EG 102.

11 EG 103.

12 EG 116.

13 EG 116.

14 EG 117.

15 See especially *Redemptoris missio*, 54.

16 R. Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 60.

cially the English translation, where Vatican dicasteries insisted on linguistic formulations that were not at all in harmony with the accepted standards of speech in English speaking countries.[17] In such situations it is hard to see a consistency between the rhetoric and the practice. Indeed, the emphasis of *Evangelii gaudium* is on decentralization and on local churches and regions assuming greater responsibility for their own pastoral practices and an enculturation of the faith that does not rely on detailed directives from a centralized Roman authority. He states clearly that:

> [I]t is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound 'decentralization'.[18]

Pope Francis seems to be keenly aware of his responsibility for the unity of the faith but does not want to impose uniformity in its expression or celebration. Too often offices of the Roman Curia attempt to impose an unnecessary uniformity on local Churches, a Roman expression of the faith that inhibits a proper enculturation of the Gospel. Pope Francis has now raised expectations that this weakness will be addressed.[19]

4 Collegiality and Synodality

In his emphasis on decentralization, one sees a new approach to the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. He acknowledges that the papacy itself stands in need of reform and has to be supported in achieving this by the local Churches around the world. He also acknowledges that "the structures of the universal Church also need to hear the call to pastoral conversion".[20] He reiterates the invitation of John Paul II, issued in the 1995 encyclical *Ut unum sint*, for suggestions about how this might be best achieved. Since his appointment, he has begun to implement a reform of these struc-

17 For a discussion of the role played by Rome in the process of English translations of texts of the *Missale Romanum* see Thomas Whelan, "Liturgy Reform Since Vatican II: The Role Played by the Bishops of the English-speaking World", *Questions Liturgiques* 95 (2014), 81–109; see also M. Taylor, *It's the Eucharist Thank God* (Brandon: Decani Books, 2009).

18 EG 16.

19 For a good discussion of a range of issues relating to the Curia see the articles in L.C. Susin, S. Scatena, S. Ross, *Concilium* (London: SCM Press, 2013/5).

20 EG 32.

tures. The appointment of eight cardinals from dioceses around the world as his immediate advisors was a first step in decentralizing ecclesial administration and reaffirming the collegial nature of ecclesial governance. He was thus ensuring that he had immediate and personal contact with and advice from a wide variety of local Churches and was no longer dependent solely on what was filtered through the Roman dicasteries.

In *Evangelii gaudium* he reaffirmed the importance of episcopal conferences and acknowledged that the "juridical status of episcopal conferences which would see them as subjects of specific attributions, including genuine doctrinal authority, has not yet been sufficiently elaborated", which implies that *Apostolos suos* is not the last word on this issue.[21] In the Exhortation, there is a practical demonstration of the regard he has for the teaching of the episcopal conferences as he cites numerous national and regional bishops' conferences, demonstrating, too, that the role of the pope includes a listening role, where he hears the concerns of local churches, learns from them, and in turn shares their concerns and insights with the universal Church. He follows the same pattern in *Laudato si*, quoting sixteen different conferences and, interestingly, half of those references are to various Latin American conferences. The inclusion of pastoral agendas from other parts of the Church also demonstrates the Church's magisterium is more than the papal magisterium; that it includes the active magisterium of the entire college of bishops and that the ongoing interaction between the two is essential for a living Church.[22]

In his interview with Antonio Spadaro, he made clear that local episcopal conferences should be dealing with many of the issues that are being referred to Rome for adjudication. In fact, he states that the Roman dicasteries are at the service of these conferences. He says thus:

> It is striking to see the number of reports of a lack of orthodoxy which are sent to Rome. I think each case should be investigated by the local bishops' conferences, which can rely on valuable assistance from Rome. These cases, in fact, are much better dealt with locally. The Roman dicasteries are mediators; they are not middlemen or managers.[23]

21 Ibid.

22 EG 52.

23 E.T. Shaun Whiteside, *My Door is Always Open: A Conversation on Faith, Hope and the Church in a Time of Change. Pope Francis with Antonio Spadaro* (London; New York; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2014), 60–61.

If he can ensure that this counsel is followed many of the tensions that have arisen because of the censuring of the theologians by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith could be avoided and dealt with in a less fractious manner.[24] Francis's stance on the role of episcopal conferences does not emerge from a reflection on Church structures in themselves but comes from the priority he gives to the missionary nature of the Church. He notes that "[ex]cessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the Church's life and her missionary outreach".[25] Excessive centralization turns the Church inwards and creates that self-referential attitude that he identified as problematic during his pre-conclave address. The Church's magisterium and pastoral outreach, then, has to be outwardly focused and attentive to the needs of its people in the variety of cultures and circumstances in which it is rooted if it is to be successful in carrying out its mission. It is in this complex and varied social context that the episcopal conferences play such an important role in furthering the Church's mission. The priority of evangelization conditions how the Church shapes its structures and implies a readiness to adapt these to the needs of the mission. Indeed, the mission has priority over the Church, in so far as the initiative lies with God, as the pope stresses on several occasions in *Evangelii gaudium*.[26] The Church is at the service of mission: to reveal in word and in action God's merciful plan for all God's people.

The Church as the pilgrim People of God is synodal by nature. Ecclesial synodality, as distinct from collegiality, emphasizes the mutual recognition of local churches, where there is mutual recognition and affirmation of each other's catholicity. It is also an implicit recognition that each local Church is an instantiation of the universal Church. Synodality has become an important theme in the practice and discourse of Pope Francis. In his interview with Spadaro he acknowledged that it might be time to change the method of the synods of bishops "because it seems to me that the current method is not dynamic".[27] He has already effected a change in how the Synod works, firstly by having a much more extensive consultative process involving all members of the Church being asked to share their views on the issues under discussion and secondly, by having the synodal process extend over two meetings of the bishops.

24 See R. Gaillardetz (ed.), *When the Magisterium Intervenes: The Magisterium and Theologians in Today's Church* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2012).

25 EG 32

26 Cf. EG 12, 24, 111, 112, 124.

27 *My Door is Always Open*, 61.

The pope was also anxious that bishops spoke their minds openly and freely in the synodal discussions. During the first meeting of the Synod in 2014, he underlined that it is necessary to say "all that, in the Lord, one feels the need to say: without polite deference, without hesitation. And, at the same time, one must listen with humility and welcome, with an open heart, what your brothers say. *Synodality* is exercised with these two approaches".[28] In the course of his address, he also said, "You will give voice in *synodality*. It is a great responsibility: to bring the realities and problems of the Churches, in order to help them to walk on that path that is the Gospel of the family". This was a liberating message for the bishops and for the wider Church because, as he admitted himself, previously many of the bishops participating in the Synod felt restrained in their contributions; lest some of their opinions might cause offence to the pope. Now conversations are to be more open and frank, acknowledging the genuine pastoral difficulties that are encountered in proclaiming the Gospel in a differentiated and complex world. At the end of the Synod in 2014, he thanked the bishops for their openness and he assured them that he was not worried about the range of opinions and positions being aired.[29]

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, the pope addressed the Synodal assembly and again outlined his vision for a synodal Church. He said that "synodality is a constitutive element of the Church and offers the most appropriate framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself". He then outlines three levels at which this synodality is operative, which is quoted here in full:

> The first level of the exercise of *synodality* is had in the particular Churches. After mentioning the noble institution of the Diocesan Synod, in which priests and laity are called to cooperate with the bishop for the good of the whole ecclesial community, the *Code of Canon Law* devotes ample space to what are usually called "organs of communion" in the local Church: the presbyteral council, the college of consultors, chapters of canons and the pastoral council. Only to the extent that these

28 Pope Francis, "Greeting of Pope Francis to the Synod Fathers During the First General Congregation of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops". Monday, 6 October 2014, at <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141006_padri-sinodali.html> (Accessed November 13, 2015).

29 Pope Francis, "Address at the End of the Synod [2014]", at <http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/10/18/pope_francis_speech_at_the_conclusion_of_the_synod/110894> (Accessed August 3, 2015).

organizations keep connected to the 'base' and start from people and their daily problems, can a synodal Church begin to take shape: these means, even when they prove wearisome, must be valued as an opportunity for listening and sharing.

The second level is that of Ecclesiastical Provinces and Ecclesiastical Regions, Particular Councils and, in a special way, Conferences of Bishops. We need to reflect on how better to bring about, through these bodies, intermediary instances of *collegiality*, perhaps by integrating and updating certain aspects of the ancient ecclesiastical organization. The hope expressed by the Council that such bodies would help increase the spirit of episcopal *collegiality* has not yet been fully realized. We are still on the way, part-way there. In a synodal Church, as I have said, "it is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound 'decentralization'".

The last level is that of the universal Church. Here the Synod of Bishops, representing the Catholic episcopate, becomes an expression of *episcopal collegiality* within an entirely synodal Church. Two different phrases: 'episcopal collegiality' and an 'entirely synodal Church'. This level manifests the *collegialitas affectiva*, which can also become in certain circumstances 'effective', joining the bishops among themselves and with the Pope in solicitude for the People God.

5 The Benefits of Synodality

His approach to the Synodal process has generated a fresh confidence in this institution and has modelled for other ecclesial bodies a way for decision-making on difficult pastoral issues. A Synodal approach that takes into account the experiences and concerns of all the faithful is more likely to be credible to a wider public and ultimately to facilitate the reception of the final outcome of the Synod itself. One has only to remember how the documents of the United States Bishops' Conference were well received when the bishops there followed a similar consultative process, without compromising in the end on essentials of doctrine or principle.[30]

30 See E. Duffy, "Episcopal Conferences in the Context of Communion: Some Notes on the American Experience", *The Jurist* 64 (2004), 137–167.

The approach to ecclesial synodality being adopted by Pope Francis is beginning to facilitate an aspect of episcopal ministry that has been dormant for quite some time, namely, the responsibility to represent the distinctiveness of the local Church to the other Churches, including the Church of Rome. Bishops have been very faithful in representing the Church of Rome to their own Churches. They have been far less effective in the other direction. In bringing the gifts and difficulties they encounter locally to the attention of other Churches, not least the Church of Rome, they enrich the vitality of the whole Church and will, in the process, offer and receive greater consolation and support in promoting the vision and values of the Gospel universally.

Synodality, as John R. Quinn has pointed out, brings a level of accountability to episcopal ministry. Quinn has shown how this was an effective instrument in ensuring that bishops could be held accountable when they convened local synodal meetings in the early centuries of the Church's existence.[31]

The synodality of the Church is also a basis on which the Pope sees the prospect of building stronger ecumenical relations with the Eastern Orthodox Churches.[32] When he met with a delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I, in Rome on June 27, 2015, he said: "The careful examination of how in the Church the principle of synodality and the service of the one who presides are articulated will make a significant contribution to the progress of relations between our Churches".[33] He indicated, in the Spadaro interviews, that he sees in the dialogues with the Orthodox an opportunity to learn more about the nature and operation of the synodal principle. It offers

31 *Ever Ancient, Ever New: Structure of Communion in the Church* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), 8–12. Quinn in his text had already shown how these synodal structures being outlined recently by Pope Francis enrich the effectiveness of the Church's own governance.

32 Norman Tanner has noted that the first seven ecumenical councils had a distinctively Eastern influence. They were summoned by the eastern emperor of the day, the participants were mostly Asian and "a pronounced eastern face appears in the creeds and other statements of the seven councils in question" (*Is the Church too Asian? Reflections on the Ecumenical Councils* [Rome: Chavara Institute of Indian and Inter-religious Studies & Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002], 18–19. Tanner has also suggested that regular and effective regional councils, especially in the first millennium "helped to keep the early Church up to date, indeed ahead of its time. We can see this in terms both of church order and government and of doctrine. In all sorts of ways the early Church was ahead of its time in the social and political orders". (*Was the Church too Democratic: Councils, Collegiality and the Church of the Future* [Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2003], 19).

33 "Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, June 27, 2015", at <http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/06/27/pope_francis_greets_delegation_from_ecumenical_patriarch/1154436> (Accessed 3 August, 2015). Cf. EG 246.

the possibility of balancing the approach to ecclesial governance that can be overly reliant on primatial authority, or indeed the personal authority of any local bishop. Similarly, in *Laudato si*, he expresses his hope for full ecclesial communion with Bartholomew I and cites him extensively in their shared concern for the environment.[34]

6 Participative Bodies in Local Ecclesial Governance

Just as the pope sees the need for a reform of structures at the universal level to ensure a dynamic missionary outreach, he sees the same need at the local level. He calls on bishops to ensure that all of the participative bodies in their dioceses are also working to ensure that this happens:

> In his mission of fostering a dynamic, open and missionary communion, [the bishop] will have to encourage and develop the means of participation proposed in the Code of Canon Law, and other forms of pastoral dialogue, out of a desire to listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear.[35]

The diocesan bodies referenced by him are the diocesan synod, the finance council, the presbyteral council, the college of consultors, the pastoral council, as well as parish pastoral councils and finance councils.[36] This shows his concern for dialogue at the local level. The bishop who listens to the needs of his people will be better able to place the local Church on a genuinely missionary footing. Structures are at the service of mission, they recognize the variety of roles and responsibilities proper to all the baptized and those in ordained ministries. Nevertheless, the work of evangelization is what unites and sustains all of them.

34 Cf. *Laudato Si*, Par. 7–9.

35 EG, 31. For a discussion of the role and value of the diocesan synod see J.G. Curmi, *The Diocesan Synod as a Pastoral Event* (Roma: Pontificia Università Lateranense, 2005); on presbyteral councils see, E. Duffy, "Presbyteral Collegiality: precedents and horizons", *The Jurist* 69 (2009), 116–154.

36 The roles of these bodies in the light of EV are discussed at some length by J.A Renken, "Pope Francis and Participative Bodies in the Church: Canonical Reflections", *Studia Canonica* 48/1 (2014), 203–233.

7 Common Ground with ARCIC

The direction in which the pope is pointing the Church with regard to the exercise of authority and leadership is consistent with the lines of convergence which have been reached between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church on the question of authority in the Church. These points of agreement were summarized in the 1998 agreed statement of ARCIC, *Authority in the Church III*:

> Acknowledgement that the Spirit of the Risen Lord maintains the people of God in obedience to the Father's will. By this action of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Lord is active in the Church (cf. *The Final Report, Authority in the Church I*, 3);
>
> A recognition that because of their baptism and their participation in the *sensus fidelium* the laity play an integral part in decision making in the Church (cf. *Authority in the Church: Elucidation*, 4);
>
> The complementarity of primacy and conciliarity as elements of *episcope* within the Church (cf. *Authority in the Church I*, 22);
>
> The need for a universal primacy exercised by the Bishop of Rome as a sign and safeguard of unity within a re-united Church (cf. *Authority in the Church II*, 9);
>
> The need for the universal primate to exercise his ministry in collegial association with the other bishops (cf. *Authority in the Church II*, 19); an understanding of universal primacy and conciliarity which complements and does not supplant the exercise of *episcope* in local churches (cf. *Authority in the Church I*, 21–23; *Authority in the Church II*, 19).[37]

While both Churches noted these positive developments, they also agreed that there is still need for further study of collegiality, conciliarity, and the role of laity in decision-making, as well as the universal primacy. Nevertheless, the direction and tone being set by Pope Francis can only be another positive contribution to a better understanding of how these elements of ecclesial life can be better understood and practised.

37 *The Gift of Authority* (*Authority in the Church III*), 2015, at <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_12051999_gift-of-autority_en.html> (Accessed 10 August 2015).

8 A Confident Pneumatology

Another major mark of this pope's ecclesiology is the prominence that he gives to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is mentioned forty-nine times in *Evangelii gaudium*. This contrasts sharply with the Christological emphasis of Benedict XVI, who only mentioned the Spirit three times in the three encyclicals that he issued. Neglect of pneumatology has been a recurrent criticism of Western ecclesiology by Orthodox theologians and also by the Free Churches.[38] If the Church's point of reference is purely Christological, it can be open to the charge that it is a rigid, legal structure that is focused on its institutional elements and impervious to change or criticism. It may be tempted to a self-understanding that follows a deductive line of argumentation to the neglect of inductive approaches, which open it to the influence of contemporary culture and experiences.

Despite the frequency of the references to the Spirit, one could not claim that he has systematically worked out a pneumatology to accompany his ecclesial agenda. Nevertheless, it is so well integrated into his thought that it appears to come naturally for him to acknowledge constantly the presence and action of the Spirit in the world and in the Church. Reference has already been made to the fact that he does not appeal to the Body of Christ as an image for the Church but this is more than offset by the constant referencing of the Spirit. Although he doesn't quote him, he uses a phrase of St Augustine in describing the Holy Spirit as "the soul of the Church".[39] Walter Kasper has remarked: "Calling the Holy Spirit the soul of the Church is to say that it is he who builds up the Church, maintains it, quickens it and animates it, lets it grow, orders and leads it".[40] This accurately summarizes the understanding of Pope Francis.

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38 Yves Congar notes the criticisms of Orthodox theologians during the discussion of the schema *De ecclesia* at the second period of Vatican II ("The Church the People of God", *Concilium* 1/1 [1965], 13). Elsewhere Congar describes much Western theology as a kind of 'Christological monism' ("Pneumatologie ou 'christomonisme' dans la tradition latine" *Ephemerides theologiae lovanienses* 46 [1969], 394–416). For a helpful overview of the pneumatology of Vatican II see Christopher O'Donnell, *Ecclesia: A Theological Encyclopedia of Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), *s.v.* Pneumatology and Ecclesiology; Roger Haight deals extensively with the significance of pneumatology in a wide variety of ecumenical contexts in his *Comparative Ecclesiology*, Vol 2: *Christian Community in History* (New York and London: Continuum, 2005); for a good discussion on the ecclesiology of Pentecostalism see V.-M. Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

39 EG 261.

40 *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission*, 136.

His profound awareness of the Holy Spirit is the basis for his positive outlook on both the world and the Church. He rejects any 'sterile pessimism' with regard to the world. "With the eyes of faith", Pope Francis states, "we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness, never forgetting that 'where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more' (Rom 5:20)".[41] He goes on to align himself with the sentiments of St Pope John XXIII, who similarly dismissed the prophets of doom in his opening speech at Vatican II. He believes that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone, seeking "to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds".[42] The Spirit is also active in non-Christian religions when their adherents are faithful to their own consciences and brings to the surface among them various gifts that allow them "to live in greater harmony and peace". Furthermore, "Christians … can also benefit from these treasures built up over many centuries, which can help us better to live our own beliefs".[43]

The work of evangelization in the Church is to cooperate with this liberating Spirit, bringing to completion the work of creation, wherein all were made in the image of the Triune God and ultimately to share in the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The whole of creation is longing for this fulfilment since there is nothing beyond God's reach or influence. The Spirit is working in all situations and in all peoples, drawing them towards that destiny. So, the task of evangelizers is to articulate more clearly the deep desires in the hearts of all men and women, to show where their hearts will find rest and to establish bonds of communion and charity among them that will offer concrete signs of God's merciful love and plan for the whole world. To engage in this work itself raises the sensitivity of the evangelizers to the workings of the Holy Spirit, and takes them beyond their own limited spiritual constructs.[44] This is a profoundly liberating vision of the Spirit, which provides a deep underpinning for the positive perspective from which the pope views the Church and its mission.

41 EG 84.

42 EG 178.

43 EG 254.

44 EG 272.

9 The Spirit Creates Unity, not Uniformity

Pope Francis indicates that "The Holy Spirit builds up the communion and harmony of the people of God".[45] Such confidence in this work of the Spirit allays any fears that there might be about diversity in the Church. The Spirit facilitates unity but does not impose uniformity. This allows for a rich cultural diversity in which the Gospel becomes incarnate in human history. Indeed, he warns, that the Church could easily make the mistake of attempting to impose one cultural expression of Christianity on others, which could amount to fanaticism rather than a true evangelizing zeal.

Within the Church itself, there is a rich diversity of gifts and charisms, which are the fruit of the Spirit. He recognizes that at times these can be an uncomfortable reality, but even that discomfort can be a sign of the Spirit at work. The test of the authenticity of the charisms, however, is their willingness and "ability to be integrated harmoniously into God's holy and faithful people for the good of all".[46] It is hard to avoid the assumption here that he had in mind the various polarizations that have arisen in the Church since the Council. On the one hand, he is showing tolerance for this diversity, and, on the other, gently appealing for greater ecclesial communion on both sides. For example, he recognizes the great contribution of new movements to the life of the Church, who are themselves a fruit of the Spirit. He says:

> Frequently they bring a new evangelizing fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed. But it will prove beneficial for them not to lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church. This kind of integration will prevent them from concentrating only on part of the Gospel or the Church, or becoming nomads without roots.[47]

Consistent with a comprehensive articulation of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church is the demand for all its members to engage in serious discernment. He encourages "each particular Church to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform".[48] The necessity for wise, evangelical and pastoral discernment is a recurring theme in his Apostolic

45 EG 117.
46 EG 130.
47 EG 29.
48 EG 30.

Exhortation. It is a reminder of the freedom that the Church has to make the necessary changes or to adapt its strategies in light of new pastoral issues that arise as it makes its pilgrim journey through the world. His insistence on the importance of discernment is also an inevitable legacy of his Jesuit formation and pastoral practice. Indeed it is a hallmark of the Jesuit way of decision-making.[49]

10 Importance of Popular Piety

Another example of ecclesial diversity to which he refers is that of popular piety, revealing more obviously his own experience of the Church in Latin America and quoting directly from the *Aparecida Document* of 2007. Popular piety is, firstly, one of the riches which the Holy Spirit pours out on the Church. Secondly, it is an instance of the inculturation of the Gospel, where:

> [E]ach portion of the people of God, by translating the gift of God into its own life and in accordance with its own genius, bears witness to the faith it has received and enriches it with new and eloquent expressions. … This is an ongoing and developing process, of which the Holy Spirit is the principal agent.[50]

Thirdly, it is the lived faith-experience of many poor families, who may not be familiar with the formulations of the creed, but who have a profound confidence in God's mercy and love. One senses in his articulation of this point, the intimate familiarity of a pastor who has witnessed first-hand this expression of faith in the homes of the poor in Buenos Aires:

> I think of the steadfast faith of those mothers tending their sick children who, though perhaps barely familiar with the articles of the creed, cling to a rosary; or of all the hope poured into a candle lighted in a humble home with a prayer for help from Mary, or in the gaze of tender love directed to Christ crucified. No one who loves God's holy people will view

49 See J.J. Toner, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching on Christian Decision Making* (St Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991); also his *A Commentary on St Ignatius's Rules for the Discernment of Spirits* (St Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982); E. Duffy, "Processes for Communal Discernment: Diocesan Synods and Assemblies", *The Jurist* 71 (2011), 77–90.

50 EG 122.

> these actions as the expression of a purely human search for the divine. They are the manifestation of a theological life nourished by the working of the Holy Spirit who has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5).[51]

He sees in this popular piety a rich *locus theologicus*, demanding the attention of the Church and its theologians because here among the poor the Gospel is already being enculturated and it is important to consider this phenomenon in the context of the Church's work of evangelization.

Apart from the task of evangelizing cultures, each member of the Church bears a responsibility for its mission. The Spirit gives the courage, the *parrhesia*, necessary to proclaim the Gospel in every time and place, even in the face of opposition.[52] The missionary engagement to which he invites all members of the Church is at once humble but also capable of robust engagement with the wider world. He is quite clear that a privatized spirituality is not acceptable, but that prayer must have an outward missionary focus and be accompanied by the offering of one's life in mission.[53] Love of God is reflected in love of one another and, unless we are in touch with the misery that so many people experience, it is hard for us to have any real sense of God's love at work in us.

11 The Aparecida Document: A Universal Application

At the meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean bishops, CELAM, held at Aparecida in May 2007, the bishops elected Jorge Bergoglio to chair the committee charged with drafting the final document. Two other key participants in the production of the Aparecida document were Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz, co-president of CELAM, and Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga. Both are on the eight-member committee of Cardinals advising the pope in the exercise of the Petrine ministry. Thus, with three of the most significant members of the conference involved in the current reform of the Church, it is inevitable that Aparecida will influence its direction.

The Aparecida document is a call to discipleship and mission. Christ is at the centre and the disciple is the one who has a personal encounter and rela-

51 EG 125.

52 EV 259.

53 EV 262.

tionship with him.[54] This engagement leads to a missionary impulse which impels the disciple into a missionary mode, anxious to share the joy, love and hope that is to be found in this living relationship with Christ.[55] The encounter with Christ is the "source of life for the Church and the soul of its evangelizing action".[56] Pope Francis reiterates this principle again in *Evangelii gaudium*: "The primary reason for evangelising is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him".[57] This provides a rationale for the Church and its members not being 'self-referential' or simply Church-centred. The focus is first on Christ and then outwards in a missionary attitude, extending his proclamation and embodiment of the Kingdom of God to the whole world, bringing the compassion and mercy of Christ to all whatever their condition.

Another key theme of the Aparecida document is its endorsement of the preferential option for the poor: "The preferential option for the poor is one of the distinguishing features of our Latin American and Caribbean church".[58] The bishops go on to say: "'the suffering faces of the poor are the suffering face of Christ'. They question the core of the Church's action, its ministry, and our Christian attitudes".[59] This concern for the poor has already been demonstrated by the pope in so many of his public activities and articulated powerfully in *Evangelii gaudium*, where he says:

> I want a Church which is poor for the poor …. We need to let ourselves be evangelised by them …. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voices to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.[60]

The same priorities outlined by the Latin American bishops are now those of the Bishop of Rome. The Aparecida document shows the renewed determination of the Church to be missionary, to reach into every area of life and to every corner of the earth:

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54 *V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean: Disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ, so that our Peoples may have life in Him. Concluding Document, Aparecida, 13–31 May, 2007*.

55 Ibid., 244.

56 Ibid., 247.

57 EG 264.

58 *Concluding Document, Aparecida, 13–31 May, 2007*, No 391.

59 Ibid., 393

60 EG 198.

> From the cenacle of Aparecida we commit to begin a new stage in our pastoral journey, declaring ourselves in permanent mission (emphasis in the original). With the fire of the Spirit we will enflame our Continent with love … To be a missionary is to announce the Kingdom with creativity and boldness in every place where the Gospel has not been sufficiently announced or welcomed, especially in the difficult or forgotten environments, and beyond our borders.[61]

It was obvious in Bergoglio's address to the pre-conclave meetings that this desire to reach out to the peripheries was of primary concern for him. The same sense of urgency is expressed early in *Evangelii gaudium*: "it is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the Gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance or fear".[62]

When Bergoglio was asked what was so special about the emergence of the agenda sketched out in the Aparecida Document he listed three things: first, it emerged from the ground up; next, it had the support of the people accompanying the process in prayer; and finally it was open-ended, remaining open to change and development.[63] One can see that he is consistent with this approach in *Evangelii gaudium* concerning his respect for the fact that the whole Church, in all its members, is Spirit- filled and gifted. "The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression".[64] There is here a profound respect for God's action in all of the baptized faithful and an imperative for those in leadership to listen to their voices.

12 Anomalies

While the overall assessment of his pontificate to date has to be positive, there are some actions which Pope Francis has taken that show anomalies in his

61 "Message of the fifth general conference to the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean", *v General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean: Disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ, so that our Peoples may have life in Him. Concluding Document, Aparecida, 13–31 May, 2007*.

62 EG 23.

63 "What I would have said at the Consistory: An interview with Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires," at <http://www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_16457_l3.htm>, Accessed 26 August 2014.

64 EG 119.

overall teaching and practice. The first is that he seemed to usurp the tradition of the Italian bishops' conference by intervening directly in appointing its Secretary General. Normally the pope would appoint the person nominated by the conference. In this instance he acted *motu proprio* when he appointed Bishop Nunzio Galantino. However, some are inclined to see it as an overriding concern to ensure that a pastoral agenda is maintained by the conference. From comments made by Galantino, it would seem that his pastoral outlook is very similar to that of the pope.[65]

A more serious anomaly, however, is his publication, again *motu proprio,* of *Mitis judex*,[66] on annulment procedures. Among the criticisms levelled at the document are that: The pope did not consult those commissions in the Vatican which would and should be responsible in counselling him in such an important matter as the annulment process; the normal procedures of the legislation in the Universal Church have been thus levered out; the Bishops' Conferences, the relevant Congregations and Councils and even the Apostolic Signatura (the highest court of the Church also dealing with the annulments) were not consulted; against the often proclaimed and invited principles of synodality and of 'openness', the pope nonetheless decided, seemingly rashly, to go ahead with the *motu proprio*, even though at the last Synod of Bishops in 2014, there was not yet a 'unanimous consent' to carry forth this streamlining move; many theologically contested problems have been simply ignored by Pope Francis; several passages in the Motu Proprio contain very vague formulations which are purportedly to help someone decide whether the quick procedure itself ought to be started – such as someone's putatively "lacking Faith" or other reasons that are not unequivocally specified; "it is a novelty in the legislation that a legal text ends with the expression 'etc.' and it thus thereby keeps open other options"; Pope Francis did not himself follow the regular procedures of legislation.[67]

65 See the comments of Hannah Roberts, "Bishop calls for Church to listen to calls for Communion for divorcees" at <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/771/0/senior-bishop-calls-for-church-to-listen-to-calls-for-communion-for-divorcees-and-married-clergy> (Accessed November 15, 2015).

66 Pope Francis, *Mitis judex Dominus Jesus* (2015), at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio_20150815_mitis-iudex-dominus-iesus.html> (Accessed November 15, 2015).

67 M. Hickson, "Secret Vatican Curia dossier critiques Pope's annulment changes: Mueller warns of harm to Church", at <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/vatican-prelates-quietly-circulate-dossier-raising-concern-over-popes-annul> (Accessed November 14, 2015).

These are serious criticisms levelled against the pope's Apostolic Letter. It seems inevitable that some of the concerns that have been voiced will eventually have to be ameliorated. On the other hand, the pope issued this letter just ahead of the Synod of Bishops meeting in October 2015, amidst much debate among various groupings of cardinals on how best to proceed with addressing problematic issues regarding marriage and the family.[68] He was once again signalling a desire to see a pastoral solution and the application of mercy in difficult situations of marital breakdown. This seems to be the justifying principle even if there are canonical problems in need of further refinement in the letter.

13 Conclusion

Pope Francis has retrieved the positive vision for ecclesial renewal outlined by Vatican II, especially with his emphasis on the Church as the People of God and an accompanying pneumatology. His personal style of ministry, his dispensing with many of the trappings of the papal office, his prioritizing the poor and marginalized, his openness with regard to the Church's own failings, his admission of the need for reform of the Curia and his efforts to effect that reform have all contributed to the positive reception that his presentation of Church teaching and ministry have received to date.

His appointment has signalled the emergence of the global Church, one that is no longer Euro-centric but more conscious of the agendas that press on the Church and its people on the other continents. He has brought specifically a Latin American perspective to bear on the ecclesial agenda but this, like the previous European perspective, is only one in the life of a global Church. In Asia and Africa, the Church is growing rapidly and these regions too have their own specific concerns, all of which need to be adequately represented by the Church's magisterium. Pope Francis has begun to lay the foundation for this to happen and he will have to continue the effort to ensure that it is solidly built upon over the coming years. He will have to put in place adequate structures to affect the reforms he proposes. One way in which this could happen is by the creation of patriarchates in various regions of the world, as Archbishop John

68 See W. Aymans, *Eleven Cardinals Speak on Marriage and the Family* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015); Cardinal Robert Sarah, et al., *Christ's New Homeland – Africa: Contributions to the Synod on the Family by African Pastors* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015).

Quinn has already suggested,[69] that would ensure a proper enculturation of the Gospel about which he has spoken so often.

He has given significant encouragement to bishops and bishops' conferences to address issues locally and not expect Rome to solve all their specific problems. This is a very positive development because for far too long the role of the bishops has been paralyzed by excessive Roman directives and interventions. There is now a need to follow up his support for local episcopal governance by appointing bishops who are not only pastoral and spiritual but are people of imagination and courage, willing to take risks in advancing the mission of the Church in their areas of immediate responsibility. He will also have to ensure that he follows his own principles of listening and consultation in the formulation of teaching and legislation.

A paradox of the appeal of Pope Francis is that, on the one hand, he is attempting to take much of the focus off the exercise of the papal primacy, while on the other hand, this very effort is drawing more attention to his every word in the popular media. Herein lies a danger, namely, that the papacy will be further inflated in the popular imagination, once again devaluing the importance of the local Church. His efforts at reform will have to be accompanied by solid, informed and confident episcopal leadership in the local Churches throughout the world.

Pope Francis has set a challenging agenda for all in the Church, consistent with the vision of Vatican II. One must hope that the good work he has begun will effect a renewal of the Church, something of the new Spring to which John XXIII had looked forward on the eve of the Council.

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69 *Ever Ancient, Ever New*, 13–19.

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PART 3

Vatican II and Conversion

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CHAPTER 11

"To Offer a Reasoned Account of the Truth of God"[1]: Vatican II as a Lasting Call to Theological Conversion

Erik Borgman

Even before the Second Vatican Council ended, the Dutch-Flemish theologian Edward Schillebeeckx (1914–2009) predicted that the council:

> brings such openness in various fields that the life of the Church will pick up pace; so many things will break adrift that – and this is what is odd about this council – it will already be outdated in fifteen years time, even though it may now seem a gigantic leap forward compared to the time before the council, more than any other council has ever produced to my knowledge.[2]

Apparently he felt that we should not look back, but forward, to the future. A lot of exciting issues are on the theological agenda now, so let us get started right away! And this is exactly what he did.

In a sense, Schillebeeckx has been proven more than right. The situation, not just in the Church, but in the world in general, has changed to an extent nobody could have imagined in the mid-1960s. Yet, he has also been proven blatantly wrong. The documents of the Council are by no means outdated. The theological and ecclesial revolution they imply has not taken place and much still needs to be done, although it is also necessary to move beyond the position of the documents themselves. At least that is what I will argue in this essay. What the Council documents require is what I consider to be a genuine conversion: not just of the hearts of individual Christians and as a consequence of their communities, but of faith and theology itself. Of course, we also need new spiritual and ecclesial practices, as has been argued by the

1 The title is a quote from the document *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria* (29 November 2011) by the International Theological Commission, no. 59, <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi_en.html#CHAPTER_3> (Accessed 13 November 2015).

2 E. Schillebeeckx, *Het tweede Vaticaans concilie*, 1 (Tielt/Den Haag: Lannoo 1964), 89.

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French theologian Christoph Theobald. Henk Witte, to whom this volume is dedicated, has followed him in this respect.[3] But as I will try to show in this essay – and in that sense, I will follow in the footsteps of Schillebeeckx as my theological mentor – spirituality should not replace theology proper.[4] On the contrary, spirituality should have a firm basis in theology. In that sense true conversion is always theological, because it is based on a new insight on who God is for us and where God can be found.

1 The Conversion to 'A Very Closely Knit Union' with the World

Pope Francis has decided to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Council on 8 December 2015 by starting an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. This is an apt choice in many ways. As the Pope indicates:

> With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. […] The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world.[5]

Pope Francis then recalls the message of Pope John XXIII at the opening of the Council, stating that in order to become such a sign, the Church "wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity".[6] By stressing the importance of 'mercy', just as by stressing the pastoral character of the Council,

3 Cf. H. Witte, *AMDG: Een ignatiaans perspectief op de ongemakkelijke verhouding van spiritualiteit en theologie* (Tilburg: Tilburg University, 2011).

4 Schillebeeckx has always argued, from his theological inauguration in 1943 until the end of his career, that theology should try to understand intellectually what is given to be known in living faith. Cf. my *Edward Schillebeeckx: A Theologian in His History.* 1: *A Catholic Theology of Culture* (*1914–1965*) (London/New York: Continuum, 2003).

5 Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy *Misericordiae Vultus* (11 April 2015), no. 4, at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html> (Accessed 13 November 2015).

6 Opening Address of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* (11 October 1962), no. 7, at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/la/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council.html> (Accessed 13 November 2015).

however, Pope John XXIII called for a profound conversion of the Church at large and, ultimately, of Catholic theology.

On the last day before its close, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council adopted its most ground-breaking document: the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*. It was not so much ground-breaking in that it was the first example of a new type of text – there had never been a *constitutio pastoralis* before, and during the Council it was routinely called 'Schema 13' because what was envisioned did not have a name yet – nor was it ground-breaking because this document would go on to inspire important new movements in Church and theology in the decades after the Council. Ultimately *Gaudium et spes* was revolutionary because it presented a new vision of the position of the Church and theology in the contemporary world. Not that it was entirely new, of course – in that sense the insistence on a 'hermeneutics of reform', rather than a 'hermeneutics of rupture' by Pope Benedict XVI in his interpretation of the Council, is stating the obvious: in the Catholic Church change is always grounded in an underlying continuity[7] – but this change was rather fundamental in comparison to the understanding of the position of the Church since the middle of the nineteenth century, codified in the documents of the First Vatican Council (1869–1870). At the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church ultimately rediscovered the conversion that the Gospel had always implied, even to the Church that is called to represent the summons: "repent, the reign of God is at hand".

As I have said, there was no precedent for a 'pastoral' constitution on the Church in the modern world. Therefore, it was considered necessary to add an explanatory note for the term 'pastoral' in the title of *Gaudium et spes.* The first footnote of the document states that the constitution is 'pastoral', because "while dependent on principles of doctrine, its aim is to express the relationship between the church and the world and people of today".[8] To this end, it is said, the first part of the document involved the development of a doctrine "about humanity, the world in which human beings live, and its own relationship to both". The second part deals with "several aspects of modern living and

7 Cf. Address of his Holiness Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia Offering Them His Christmas Greetings (22 December 2005). Original text in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 98 (2006), 40–53. For a nuanced debate on this statement and its significance, attempting to go beyond the alternative, see J.W. O'Malley (ed.), *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* (New York/London: Bloomsbury, 2007), esp. J.A. Komonchak, "Vatican II as an "Event", 24–51 and J.W. O'Malley, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?", 52–91. See also J.W. O'Malley, *What happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2010).

8 The conciliar documents are quoted here from the translation: N. Tanner (ed.), *Vatican II: The Essential Texts* (New York: Image Books 2012).

human society and specifically on questions and problems which seem particularly urgent today", notably marriage and family, culture, social-economic life, the political order, and the concern for peace. It is stated that the analysis of these matters does not just involve permanent but also transient features, and that, for this reason, when interpreting the second part one should bear in mind 'the naturally changing circumstances of the matters treated'.

This footnote is somewhat misleading. It seems to suggest that the newness of *Gaudium et spes* is simply that it takes into account contingent historical situations. Ever since Leo XIII and his encyclical *Rerum novarum* started the tradition of catholic social teaching, however, the Roman Catholic Church has regularly judged historical and social circumstances in their particularity and contingency. As the Catholic Church understood its Social Teaching, these judgements were based on eternal principles that had been entrusted to the Church by God in Jesus Christ. However, if one wants to include *Gaudium et spes* in the tradition of Catholic Social Teaching, one has to allow for a revolution as part of this tradition. This revolution, however, is exactly what makes it impossible to truly understand the document in terms of unchanging principles, applied to changing situations, as is suggested in the first footnote. The revolution was implied in an ecclesiological shift and ultimately signals a profound change in fundamental theology and theological epistemology.

Shortly after the Council, Edward Schillebeeckx wrote that the theological breakthrough that it represented was implied in what was commonly indicated as its pastoral orientation. Schillebeeckx foresaw that the term 'pastoral', which Pope John XXIII had been using in connection with the Council right from start, would be interpreted as pertaining to the concrete application of a doctrine of faith which itself was seen as constant and fixed.[9] He believed, however, that it was exactly this distinction that the Council had made unattainable. The fact that the Council declared the Church to be the light of the world (*Lumen gentium*) in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, could still be reconciled with the view of the Church as keeper of an unchanging revelation that was God's gift to mankind. *Gaudium et spes*, however, left no doubt that the Church takes its shape in, and emerges from, the world. The Church does not start out as the keeper of God's revelation, standing outside the world and subsequently engaging with that world. It is formed by people in the world who, as it is phrased, "united in Christ … are led by the holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father". Christ's followers, who form the Church "have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every human being"

9 E. Schillebeeckx, *Het tweede Vaticaans concilie*, II (Tielt/Den Haag: Lannoo, 1966).

and thus they are and remain "truly linked with humanity and its history by the deepest of bonds".[10] Or, in the language of *Lumen gentium:*

> The mystery of the holy Church is clearly visible in its foundation. For the lord Jesus inaugurated the church when he preached the happy news of the coming of the kingdom of God that has been promised in the scriptures [...] When therefore the church, equipped with the gifts of its founder and faithfully keeping his precepts of love, humility and penance, receives the mission of announcing the kingdom of Christ and of God and of inaugurating it among all peoples, it has formed the seed and the beginning of the kingdom on earth. Meanwhile as it gradually grows, it aspires after the completion of the kingdom and hopes and desires with all its strength to be joined with its king in glory.[11]

That is why it is the task of the Church as the people of God to give evidence to its "feelings of oneness, concern and love towards the whole human family of which it is a part ... by entering in conversation with it on [the] various problems" it faces.[12]

What is critical in this conception is that the world is ultimately the theological place of the disciples whom Christ had gathered to form his Church. As a result of the tumultuous debates about it during the Council, much has been made of the fact that in *Lumen gentium*, the chapter about the Church as the People of God precedes the chapter about the Church as a hierarchy. Yet, it is merely one of the consequences of the statement that "the church is in Christ as a sacrament", which is an "instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity".[13] In this statement God is presented primarily as the Creator and Redeemer of the world who can be known and found to be present by and through the Church.[14] In other words: the Church does not exist for its own sake, but as an instrumental sign of God's mission by which humanity and the world are accepted in God's own life. Writing a 'Pastoral Constitution on the Modern World' is among the consequences:

> This world is seen as the world of men and women, the whole human family in its total environment; the stage of human history notable for its

10 *Gaudium et spes*, no. 1.

11 *Lumen gentium*, no. 5.

12 *Gaudium et spes*, no. 3.

13 *Lumen gentium*, no. 1.

14 Cf. *Lumen gentium*, no. 2–4.

> toil, its tragedies and its triumphs; the world which Christians believe has been established and kept in being by its Creator's love, has fallen into the bondage of sin but has been liberated by Christ, who was crucified and has risen to shatter the power of the evil one, so that it could be transformed according to God's purpose and come to its fulfilment.[15]

Here, the world is unambiguously presented as a place of the highest theological significance; the world is, in itself, theological because of God's "very closely knit union" with it. "Presence in the world is presence with God" was the motto of the movement of the French worker-priests in the 1950s, who in turn derived it from the nineteenth-century restorer of the Dominican Order in France, Henri-Dominique Lacordaire (1802–1861). Twelve years after the suspension of this movement in 1953 by order of the Roman authorities, because it allowed itself to be too radically inspired by 'modern conditions and requirements',[16] *Gaudium et spes* meant the official adoption of their guiding principle as a fundamental principle for the entire Catholic Church.

2 A Call to Conversion Faded Away?

The fundamental approach of *Gaudium et spes* is intimately connected to the work of the French Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu. In the 1920s and 1930s, Chenu became convinced that theology is a reflection on the current situation of humankind and God's involvement with it. This was Chenu's interpretation of Thomas Aquinas's basic assumption that God is not the object of faith and theology in the same way things in the world are objects of human experience and the sciences. While God is the 'formal object', faith lives its life and theology studies the world "under the aspect of God".[17] Chenu, both a historian and a theologian, considered the great theological syntheses of the past to be more than self-contained speculative systems of thought. He regarded them as forms of reflection on a concrete situation from the point of view of a specific spirituality, embedded in a well-defined culture. Divine revelation is

15 *Gaudium et spes*, no. 2.

16 On the controversy surrounding the worker-priests, see F. Leprieur, *Quand Rome condamne: Dominicains et prêtres-ouvriers* (Paris: Plon/Cerf, 1989). This quote is from Pius XII's encyclical, *Humani Generis* (12 August 1950), no. 11–12.

17 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q. 1, art. 7. For Chenu's interpretation of Aquinas, see in particular Chr. Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie: M.-Dominique Chenu im Kontext seiner Programmschrift „Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir"* (Münster: Lit, 2010), 635–665.

not simply to be found in Scripture and the tradition of the Church. Instead, it is a living presence in the faith of the faithful that keeps developing in its reactions to new situations. Chenu believed that the intellectual reflection on these developments and the attempt to account for them intellectually is theology.[18]

This is why Chenu had hoped to be able to do more during his presence at the Council as an advisor than just informing the participating bishops about the latest developments in theological research. He was determined to open the Council to the new situation in which the world and the Church found themselves, and to have it account for its relationship with that world and its place in it. This is why he pressed for the Council to issue an opening statement for which he had even drafted a text.[19] Later, he would show his disappointment in the statement as it was actually issued by saying it "had been dipped in holy water".[20] During the Council, Chenu constantly exerted pressure to have the Church define itself as a reader of the signs of the time.[21] Here, he was following in the footsteps of Pope John XXIII – Chenu had christened him 'Doctor of the Signs of the Time' – who, in his encyclical *Pacem in terris*, published before the Council, had been calling for an *aggiornamento*, an updating of the

18 Cf. C. Geffré, "Théologie de l'incarnation et théologie des signes des temps chez Père Chenu", J. Dore, J. Fantino (eds.), *Marie-Dominique Chenu. Moyen-Âge et modernité*, colloque 28 et 29 octobre 1995 (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 131–153 ; Ch. Potworowski, *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Montreal: Mcgill-Queens University Press, 2001), 156–163; 166–180. See M.-D. Chenu, *La Parole de Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1964); M.-D. Chenu, *Peuple de Dieu dans le monde* (Paris: Cerf, 1966).

19 See A. Duval, "Le message au monde", É. Fouiloux (ed.), *Vatican II commence … Approches Francophones* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 105–118; G. Alberigo e.a. (eds.), *History of Vatican II. 2: The Formation of the Council's Identity. First Period and Intersession October 1962 – September 1963* (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 1997), 50–54. For the text of the so called 'Nuntius ad universos homines' (20 Oct. 1992), see *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 54 (1962) 822–824; for the analyses that informed Chenu's motives, see M.-D. Chenu, "Un concile à la dimension du monde" (1962), M.-D. Chenu, *La Parole de Dieu. 2: L'Évangile dans le temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 633–637.

20 For his remark that the statement was 'trempé dans l'eau bénete', see M.-D. Chenu, "Un nouveau dialogue avec le monde", *Informations Catholiques Internationales* 577 (1982), 41–42.

21 G. Alberigo, "Un concile à la dimension du monde: Marie-Dominique Chenu à Vatican II d'apres son journal", *Marie-Dominique Chenu: Moyen-Age et Modernité,* 155–172; In that same volume: G. Turbanti, "Il ruolo del P. D. Chenu nell'ellaboratione della constituzione Gaudium et spes", 173–209. See M.-D. Chenu, "Une constitution pastorale de l'Église" (1965), and "Les signes du temps" (1965), M.-D. Chenu, *Peuple de Dieu dans le Monde,* 11–34 and 35–55 respectively.

Church.[22] To some extent, the acceptance of *Gaudium et spes* witnesses to the success of Chenu's perseverance.

Immediately after the Council, *Gaudium et spes* did have considerable influence. Together with Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris* in 1963, Pope Paul VI's peace address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 4 October 1965, and the messages at the end of the Council (addressed to those in power, to intellectuals and scientists, to artists, to women, to workers, to the poor and sick and all those who suffer, and to the young), the constitution demonstrated to the outside world the determination of the Roman Catholic Church to be a credible partner in finding solutions for the problems that were haunting the world during the second half of the 1960s.[23] However, there would be little reflection on the theological renewal that *Gaudium et spes* presented. In 1968, the Latin-American Bishops Conference, held in Medellín, reflected on the question of what the theoretical and practical stance of the Church should be in their context of poverty, oppression, and violence. The document that resulted from this conference marked the beginning of Liberation Theology which, as Gustavo Gutiérrez put it, considered solidarity with the poor to be a form of contemplation and listening to God. Thus, in the view of Gutiérrez, God's presence and message became connected with and could be found by connecting with one's context.[24] Here, Gutiérrez was clearly following the theological approach developed by Chenu and fleshed out in *Gaudium et spes.* Hardly anyone seems to have noticed it at the time, however. Both supporters and opponents tended to consider liberation theology to be an expression and a theological justification of a socio-political and ethical

22 The term 'signs of the time' is first used in the apostolic constitution *Humanae Salutis* (25 December 1961) by which Pope John XXIII officially convened the Second Vatican Council, that had been announce two years earlier. The term would be next be used not in the main text, but in the subheadings that were added in the translations of the encyclical *Pacem in terris* (11 April 1963), which for the first time officially gave human rights their foundation in the Catholic tradition.

23 The messages can be found in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966) 10–17; see also Pope John XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in terris*, at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html> (Accessed 13 November 2015) Address of the Holy Father Paul VI to the United Nations Organisatiom (4 October 1965), at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_united-nations.html>.

24 This can already be seen in G. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973 & 1971), but is developed further in G. Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983 & 1979); and G. Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People* (Maryknoll: Orbis 1984 & 1983).

commitment in favour of the poor. It was not seen as the attempt to see and hear God as He is present in the contemporary world, in order to repent and turn to the places that show how God's reign is at hand.[25]

German theologian Hans-Joachim Sander, currently at the University of Salzburg in Austria, has characterized the theological revolution presented by *Gaudium et spes* as a shift from the focus on who and what God is, to a focus on where God is and what His presence implies.[26] This entails a conversion from metaphysical speculations about God to meeting God in the way He reveals Himself concretely. It is partly due to the fact that this theological undercurrent of the document was neither clearly stated, nor recognized as such, that it became so contentious. For many the Pastoral Constitution would become a symbol of the tendency in the 1960s and 1970s to modernise Church and theology by adapting them to current ways of thinking and acting. This ultimately led to a profound and paralysing polarisation within the Roman Catholic Church, particularly in the Western world. The modernising tendency, strongly endorsed by prominent Catholic intellectuals and the clergy trained during the period just before or during the Council, was heavily contested by the Roman authorities and the newly appointed bishops and cardinals of the long pontificate of Pope John Paul II that started in 1978 and ended only twenty-seven years later with his death in 2005. His successor, Pope Benedict XVI, who, when he was still known as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, had been the very influential head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith from 1981 until the end of the reign of John Paul II, continued the same policy until he stepped down from office in 2013.

The atmosphere in the Church has changed considerably since Pope Francis took office. Hopefully, this will finally allow Roman Catholic theology to develop in the direction of the ongoing conversion to God's living presence, as indicated by *Gaudium et spes*. Pope Francis's stress on the necessity of risk-taking, on mercy and solidarity as core Gospel values, and on the poor as the ones that should evangelize the Church, among other things, indicates that the chances are it will.

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25 For an attempt to counter this interpretation, see my *Sporen van de bevrijdende God: universitaire theologie in aansluiting op Latijns-Amerikaanse bevrijdingstheologie, zwarte theologie en feministische theologie* (Kampen: Kok, 1990).

26 H.J. Sander, "Theologischer Kommentar zur Pastoralkonstitution über die Kirche in der Welt von heute Gaudium et spes", P. Hünermann, B.J. Hilberath (Hrsg.), *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, Band 4 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2005), 581–886, esp. 827–869.; cf. H.J. Sander, *Einführung in die Gotteslehre* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006).

However, we cannot ignore the developments that have taken place in the meantime.[27] The extent to which *Gaudium et spes* has been brushed aside becomes clear when we study the encyclical *Fides et ratio,* published in 1998. *Fides et ratio* is emphatically programmatic and it emphasises the necessary relation between faith and reason, between Christian theology and philosophy. The encyclical ultimately deals with the question whether a real conversation between the Catholic Church and its religious tradition on the one hand, and the world with its secular wisdom on the other, is at all possible. This is an important question because, as *Fides et ratio* rightly emphasises, in the Catholic understanding, faith is not a deeply held conviction based on an inner feeling. It can and should be rationally justified and it has a truth-claim that can be assessed intellectually.

From the outset, it is remarkable how *Fides et ratio* distances itself from the solidarity with the world that characterised *Gaudium et spes* and documents of the Second Vatican Council in general. From the start, it uses the anti-modern rhetoric that had characterised many pre-conciliar texts issued by the Teaching Office of the Roman Catholic Church.[28] In a tradition that can be traced more or less from Pius IX's *Quanta cura* (1864), via Pius X's *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi dominici gregis* (1907), to Pius XII's *Humani generis* (1950), the encyclical's fifth article strongly criticises the different philosophical forms of "gnosticism and relativism which have dominated contemporary thought and led philosophical research to lose its way in the shifting sands of widespread scepticism". *Fides et ratio* signals and strongly deplores the influence of this philosophy on theology. Instead, the document states that with its "enduring appeal to the search for truth, philosophy has the great responsibility of forming thought and culture" and urges it to "strive resolutely to recover its original vocation" (art. 6). This original vocation of philosophy is, according to the encyclical, to inquire for the certitude of truth and the certitude of its absolute value that it sees as an inalienable aspect of leading a good and responsible human life (art. 27).[29]

27 See for the struggle about the meaning of the Council, M. Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press 2012).

28 John Paul II, encyclical *Fides et ratio* (14 September 1998), at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html>. (Accessed 13 November 2015). References in parentheses in the main text.

29 For an assessment of the relation between *Fides et ratio* and anti-modernist tendencies after Vatican I, see A. Dulles, "Faith and Reason: From Vatican I to John Paul II", D.R. Foster, J.W. Koterski (eds.), *The Two Wings of Catholic Thought: Essays on Fides et Ratio*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 2003, 3–21.

Without actually arguing the case, the encyclical states that it is inconceivable that the essential human longing for truth and certainty would be unattainable, however much it may sometimes seem that way (art. 29). From there, Christian faith is presented as the real fulfilment of this longing, leading human beings to the possession of an absolute truth that is trustworthy (art. 33). The encyclical uses a well-known cliché from anti-modern polemics that links the modern bias toward autonomous knowledge to the sinful pride of Adam and Eve, who violated the prohibition and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, resulting in their banishment from paradise (art. 22). *Fides et ratio* concludes that incorrect use of reason can move people away from their connection to God, whereas a correct use, on the other hand, can point to the Christian and Catholic faith as the true location of the foundational truth. According to the encyclical, the optimal relation between philosophy and theology is represented in Mary giving her assent to Gabriel's announcement that she would be mother to the saviour: by trusting in what is presented to her as a message coming from God, she becomes the bearer of the divine Word which is Truth itself (art. 108).

Ultimately, *Fides et ratio* is hardly interested in the intrinsic value of philosophical inquiry. The encyclical puts philosophy almost entirely at the service of what it sees as the task of faith and theology. According to the encyclical, to be able to present Christian faith as the ultimate truth, theology needs a "natural, consistent and true" philosophy about "the human being, the world and, more radically, of being" (art. 66). Although the encyclical expressly denies that it wants to impose one single philosophy, modern and postmodern forms of philosophy appear as seriously flawed from this point of view. *Fides et ratio* explicitly endorses the criticism of the newer philosophical movements by the teaching office of the Church, starting from the First Vatican Council (art. 52–56). Philosophical developments from the nineteenth century onward are characterised as mainly expressions of 'eclecticism', 'historicism', 'scientism', 'pragmatism' and 'nihilism' (art. 86–90). These failings are, in essence, all effected by a loss of focus on real metaphysical truth and certainty. As a remedy, the encyclical advises following the tradition of theological thought and the philosophy that is a product of it, from the Church Fathers up to scholasticism. *Fides et ratio* strongly contrasts the traditional idea of a universal and eternal truth to the idea that consent is a matter of personal preference (subjectivism) or that philosophical insight is determined by time and culture (historicism). According to the encyclical, from a Catholic point of view, truth can only be objective, timeless, and independent from context: "Truth can never be confined to time and culture; in history it is known, but it also reaches beyond history" (art. 95).

It is beyond the focus of this article to investigate the background and the value of all these statements in detail.[30] However, it is important to note that they ultimately lead up to a phrase that clearly shows how deeply the commitment of *Fides et ratio* differs from that of *Gaudium et spes*: "It is not an array of human opinions but truth alone which can be of help to theology" (art. 69).[31] This appears to be an unambiguous departure from what is fundamental to the conciliar approach: that people, because of their finitude, will forever live in this "array of human opinions" and that they need to be found there, and are in fact found by the Truth that sets them free. As the Pastoral Constitution states:

> Bishops, to whom is assigned the task of ruling the Church of God, should, together with their priests, so preach the news of Christ that all the earthly activities of the faithful will be bathed in the light of the Gospel. […] By unremitting study they should fit themselves to do their part in establishing dialogue with the world and with men of all shades of opinion.[32]

The idea in *Fides et ratio* that limitation and diversity of understanding can be overcome through abstract reasoning and surrender to the doctrine that the Church proclaims, fails to recognise that they are unavoidable aspects of being human. In contrast, *Gaudium et spes* underlines:

> The experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, by all of which the nature of man himself is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened, these profit the Church, too. […] With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, *so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage* [Italics by the author].[33]

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30 For a collection of essays that tries to do that in an intellectually rigorous manner, see L.P. Hemming, S.F. Parsons (eds.), *Redeeming Truth: Considering Faith and Reason* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press 2007).

31 In the official Latin text: "Non variae hominum opiniones, sed veritas dumtaxat theologiae opitulari potest".

32 *Gaudium et spes*, no. 43.

33 Ibid., no. 44.

Thus, the Pastoral Constitution stresses the fact that the Church can actually learn from what is going on in the array of human opinions. Not just trivial or marginal things, but aspects of what is implied in the revealed truth of the Gospel. The changing opinions of the contemporary world are not in contradiction with the eternal truth of faith, but are to be discovered as paradoxical presences of this truth by an ongoing theological engagement with them.

3 The Sacramentality of the Truth

In denying that the diversity of human ideas is helpful for theology, *Fides et ratio* in fact tends to frustrate what the encyclical itself calls "the prime commitment of theology": the understanding of the *kenosis*, the self-emptying of God in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth as Christ (art. 93). This self-emptying implies divine subjection and commitment to humanity in its concrete historicity and contingency.[34] A theology that takes this seriously, will convert to the truth that is revealed *amidst* and *in open confrontation* with the plurality of human views, and as such is part of the Church as sacrament in the way that the Council explains it.

The encyclical *Fides et ratio* (art. 13) quotes mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), who wrote:

> Just as Jesus Christ went unrecognised among men, so does his truth appear without external difference among common modes of thought. So too does the Eucharist remain among common bread.[35]

This denotes the self-emptying of the divine sublimity in human vulnerability that Christian tradition holds to be essential for Jesus Christ's becoming human as the Word of God. The encyclical reasons that this emptied-out Truth refers us to the sacramental character that its revelation has taken, according to Catholic tradition. The truth does not show itself in its massive sublimity, but

34 To Chenu, this so-called 'law of incarnation' was the starting point of his theology of the signs of the time; cf. M.-D. Chenu, "Histoire du salut et historicité de l'homme dans le renouveua de la theologie", L. Shook, G.-M. Bertrand (eds.), *La théologie du renouveau*, Congres Toronto 20–25 août 1967 (Montéal/Paris: Fides/Cerf, 1968), vol 1, 21–32.

35 B. Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. L. Brunschvick, no. 789; ed. L.M. Lafuma, no. 225: "Comme Jésus-Christ est demeuré inconnu parmi les hommes, ainsi *la* vérité demeure parmi les opinions communes, sans différence à l'extérieur. Ainsi l'Eucharistie parmi le pain commun". The encyclical is wrong in quoting it as *his* truth, as if Pascal wrote: "*sa* verité". For Pascal, in modernity *all* truth is unavoidably guised as common opinion.

instead it is hidden in earthly signs that are real and present among us. From this, *Fides et ratio* concludes that reason needs faith to be able to recognize the presence of the truth in the guise of an opinion like any other. However, in a closer reflection on its sacramental character, a fundamentally different vision of truth from what *Fides et ratio* presents can be developed, a vision more in line with *Gaudium et spes* and, I would argue, more promising for the necessary development of theology.

The corpus of Vatican II documents thoroughly reflects on the unique character of the sacraments and of sacramental presence, in part summarizing earlier innovative research.[36] In accordance with tradition, the Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum concilium*, routinely traces the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, as they have been understood since the medieval period, back to Jesus Christ himself. The emphasis in the document is, however, on Christ's renewed presence that the sacraments witness to and bring about.[37] As we have seen, the Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen gentium*, considers the Church as a whole to be 'as a sacrament' and, according to *Gaudium et spes*, this means that the Church in the world "is at once manifesting and actualising the mystery of God's love for man".[38] So, according to the Council, the sacraments do not primarily point to Jesus as their historical origin, but to his actual presence as a living "sacrament of the encounter with God".[39] The quotation from Pascal in *Fides et ratio* seems to suggest a link between the self-emptying of the truth and the emptying-out that is characteristic of sacramental presence. The lack of resplendence of the truth corresponds to the lack of visibility of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the prototypical sacrament. *Gaudium et spes*, however, does not suggest the necessity of an additional 'splendour of truth'[40] in order to enforce its proper recognition and honouring. Rather, it accepts the hiddenness of the divine truth "for the wise and the intelligent", that according to the Gospel, is "revealed … to infants" (cf. Matthew

36 See C.E. O'Neill, "Die Sakramententheologie", H. Vorgrimler, R. VanderGucht (Hrsg.), *Bilanz der theologie im 20. Jahrhundert: Perspektive, Strömungen, Motive in der christliche und nichtchristliche Welt.* Band 3 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1969), 244–294.

37 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium* (4 December 1963), passim.

38 *Gaudium et spes*, no. 45.

39 See E. Schillebeeckx, *Christus, sacrament van de Godsontmoeting* (Bilthoven: Nelissen, 1959).

40 Cf. John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (6 August 1993) at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html> (Accessed 13 November 2015). This encyclical concentrates on the importance of an absolute moral truth, and *Fides et ratio* goes on in the same tone, concentrating on the importance of absolute intellectual truth.

11:25; Luke 10:21). In other words, the divine truth speaks to people who are themselves hidden from the gaze of those that "have set [their] minds not on divine things, but on human things" (cf. Matthew 16:23). It requires, therefore, a conversion to be able to see it.

Interestingly enough, this conversion seems to be what Pope Francis is driving at when he speaks about the preferential option for the poor. As he writes in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium:*

> I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them.[41]

Christoph Theobald, recently performed a thorough investigation of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, reading them as the pastoral interventions in the modern context they were intended to be.[42] He concluded that the Council, fifty years after it came to a close, can still help us to understand our situation as a place for living, both as a communion of followers of Jesus Christ and as people belonging to our contemporary world and situation.[43] He considers this to be, first and foremost, a spiritual journey of faith, a way of "going forward", as it is called in the tradition of Ignatian spirituality, responding to what God is communicating to us through the situation and our responses to it.[44] This seems very much in line with what Pope Francis expects from his fellow Jesuits. He told them:

> We need to seek God in order to find him, and find him in order to seek him again and always. Only this restlessness gives peace to the heart of a Jesuit, a restlessness that is also apostolic, but which must not let us grow

41 Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), no. 198,, at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html> (Accessed 13 November 2015).

42 C. Theobald, *La réception du concile Vatican II*. Tome 1: *Accéder à la source* (Paris: Cerf, 2009).

43 C. Theobald, *Le concile Vatican II: Quel avenir?* (Paris: Cerf, 2015).

44 C. Theobald, *Le christianisme comme style: Une manière de faire de la théologie en postmodernité* (Paris: Cerf, 2007); cf. also Ph. Bacq, C. Theobald (eds.), *Paroles humaines, Parole de Dieu* (Paris: Salvator, 2015). Cf. on a more pastoral level C. Theobald, "C'est aujourd'hui le moment favorable: Pour une diagnostic théologique du temps present", C. Theobald, *Une nouvelle chance pour l'Évangile: Vers une pastorale d'engendrement* (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier/Lumen vitae/Novalis, 2004), 47–72.

> tired of proclaiming the kerygma, of evangelizing with courage. It is the restlessness that prepares us to receive the gift of apostolic fruitfulness. Without restlessness we are sterile.[45]

However, from my own Dominican point of view, it is also necessary to try to understand what ultimately happens here. How is it that we can meet God, not in the exalted and majestic, but in the lowly, without lowering and even trivialising God? How exactly do we meet God here and what does that mean?[46] These are questions that *Gaudium et spes* does not address, and, interestingly enough, Thomas Aquinas may help us here, as he explains how he understands Jesus Christ emptying himself of his equality with God, as it is stated in hymn Saint Paul quotes in his letter to the Philippians (2:6–7). Because there is an infinite gap between God and human beings, it is impossible for finite humanity to become divine, Aquinas argues. However, for the same reason, it is fitting for the divine to become human. As Aquinas writes:

> what belongs to the essence of goodness befits God. Now it belongs to the essence of goodness to communicate itself to others … Hence it belongs to the essence of the highest good to communicate itself in the highest manner to the creature.[47]

This "communication in the highest manner" is achieved by an act of union, i.e. by uniting divinity with humanity in Christ. Thus, what Christ Jesus defines, is the distinctive character of divine goodness: goodness that, out of the essence of its being good, communicates itself completely. By going to the

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45 Pope Francis, *Homily during Holy Mass on the Liturgical Memorial of the Most Holy Name of Jesus in the Church of the Gesù in Rome* (3 Januari 2014), at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140103_omelia-santissimo-nome-gesu.html> (Accessed 13 November 2015). The Italian text of the homily was printed the next day in *L'Osservatore Romano* under the title 'La compagnia degli inquieti', the society of the restless.

46 There is an old tension behind this between Dominicans and Jesuits. The Dominican theologian Melchior Cano (1509–1560) was of the opinion that in his *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius of Loyola presumed that through their interior lives human beings could be in direct contact with God through the Holy Spirit and experience God directly: the heresy of what were called the *alumbrados*; cf. S. Pavone, "A Saint under Trial: Ignatius of Loyola Between Alcalá and Rome", R.A. Maryks (ed.), *A Companion to Ignatius of Loyola: Life, Writing, Spirituality Influence* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 45–65.

47 *Summa theologiae,* III, q. 1, art. 1. Aquinas here quotes Augustine from his *De Trinitate* xiii.

extreme to communicate God's goodness, Christ profoundly shows how God is in Himself excessively good, according to Aquinas.

In his commentary on Paul's letter to the Philippians, Aquinas calls it 'beautiful' – *pulcher* – to say that Jesus Christ 'emptied himself'. Christ 'emptied himself not by putting off his divine nature, but by assuming a human nature', as Aquinas interprets the expression. Saying He 'emptied' himself really takes on a special meaning, because it shows that divine nature assumed the emptiness that characterises humanity. Aquinas formulates it thus: "the divine nature is sufficiently full, because every perfection of goodness is there; human nature and the soul are not full, but capable of fullness".[48] In Christ, God shares in human poverty and frailty, according to Aquinas, in order to invest this poverty and frailty with divine dignity. Being poor and frail and vulnerable, therefore, can be an icon of the divine.[49]

All of this is closely analogous with what, in Aquinas's view, it meant for Jesus Christ to accept death. As a sensual human being, it was natural for him to shun pain and death – and He did. However, He turns the natural aversion of pain and death into the submission to Gods will, which ultimately results in a life lived to the full and salvation from all pain and suffering. The analogy Aquinas uses is that of medicine. In medicine, it is sometimes necessary to suffer pain in order to restore health. The inclination to avoid pain therefore has to be suppressed.[50] This does not mean however, that pain is good and aversion to pain bad. The point is that the illness temporarily renders the aversion to pain self-contradictory: avoiding the pain that medicine causes would lead to greater pain and ultimately to the death that is feared in pain. Thus, by willingly submitting to temporary pain, reason takes to a higher level the will to live life and to live it to the full that is manifested in the sensual desire to avoid pain.

God is ultimately the very fullness of goodness, but in a broken world, His icon may be the suffering servant, the one who has nothing left to share but his vulnerable love that protests against the suffering as a lack of goodness. God is truth and wisdom, but in a false world, his presence may hide in preaching and performing what, under the circumstances, cannot but be perceived as foolishness: being faithful to what obviously has no place and is not wanted. Conversion to the marginal position that comes with this, is the ultimate image of the faith in its ultimate truth – which as truth, has to be obeyed. What Paul

48 *Super Epistolam B. Pauli ad Philipenses lectura*, Caput 2, lectio 2.

49 See C.A. Franks, *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas's Economic Teachings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

50 Ibid. q. 18, art. 5.

calls "the message of the cross", lacks what is commonly seen as wisdom and eloquence. Yet, in its own way, it does have this wisdom and eloquence, since it witnesses to God's faithful and loving presence in the world in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:17). When Aquinas states that in Jesus Christ, divine nature has assumed the emptiness of our current existence and the 'not yet' of what should be, and how it should be, this is what is ultimately at stake. In effect, this means that poverty and emptiness are the places where the presence of the divine fullness and richness is really to be found – in the form of their absence as assumed by the divine nature that is perfect goodness and love.

4 Hidden with Christ in God

According to Saint Paul, it is this presence, in the form of absence, which Christians share. Through their conversion and in their baptism in Jesus's death, Christians die to the world as it is and their lives are, as Paul expresses it in his letter to the Colossians, hidden with Christ in God. The marginal existence in the world as it is, reveals the fact that, ultimately, they will be proven its true heirs: "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you too will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:3–4). The mutually hidden presence of God to the world, and the world in God, is what is expressed in Jesus's proclamation that the reign of God is 'at hand' and calls us to conversion. It enables us, I believe, to find our eschatological future of abundant goodness and life as present not just in the finitude and non-divinity of the world, as *Gaudium et spes* urges us to do, but in human vulnerability, poverty, and injury through what Pope Francis calls the preferential option for the poor. Truth is thus not just found in the 'array of human opinions', but even in the heart of the illusions, fabrications, and lies by which human beings try to survive in what they often experience as a hostile world. This might even give us some indication of what it means when Saint Paul says of Jesus Christ that God made "him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). God is with us, even though we are not with God: this is, I would argue, the fundamental paradox of the Christian faith and the only thing that can save us in the situation our world is currently in. We are consistently called to conversion, and it is our main theological responsibility to make this call as explicit as possible. This is only possible by responding to it and interpreting our world through what we are given to hear and see.

What is needed is not just for people to live spiritually in this world. What is needed is that this world is read theologically. From there, it could become clear again how the world, not just in its goodness and sometimes overwhelming

beauty, but also in its repulsive ugliness and appalling evil, speaks of God as its Creator and Redeemer. It would make theology relevant again; not just for those who are committed to a religious and spiritual life, but also to those who are not even aware that they are missing such a life. And it may help us to understand a little better how it is that, as *Gaudium et spes* states:

> … since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.[51]

Wherever we are, we are in the process of being resurrected and saved. To be able to see that, we need ongoing conversion. To explain what we see and what the significance of it is, we need theology. A different theology for the most part from what we have now, but definitely theology.

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51 *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22.

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CHAPTER 12

Ecclesial Conversion: Some Canonical Reflections

Thomas J. Green

1 Introduction

Pope Francis notably addresses the theme of ecclesial conversion in his speeches and writings[1] but especially in his exercise of the papal ministry. Accordingly, most of the essays in this Festschrift rightly focus on broad conversion themes, and rightly so, given the thrust of much of Henk Witte's scholarly work. However, as a canonist, I think it would be helpful also to stress some practical structural implications of those generic theological themes, since the Church's credibility depends greatly on its practical living out of its official teachings.

Interestingly enough the ecumenical implications of ecclesial conversion were addressed some years ago by members of the Peter and Paul Seminar[2] at an interdisciplinary conference on 'Conversion and Reform in View of the Unity of the Church' held in 2009 at Erfurt, Germany, under the leadership of Dr. Myriam Wijlens.[3] My previous paper on selected legislative structures[4] will serve as a key source for the current *Festschrift* text. Initially I will reflect very briefly on institutional renewal in the Church. Such a motif is pertinent not simply to distinctly Catholic Church reform but also to a deepening of our varied ecumenical relationships, which have significant canonical implications. My primary focus, however, will be considering various institutional implications of such a call to conversion. I will briefly discuss various participative structures at different ecclesial levels: universal (synod of bishops), intermediate or regional (episcopal conferences and particular councils), and

1 See especially Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2013) (From now on: EG and paragraph number).

2 For an overview of the Seminar's origins and purpose, see M. Wijlens, "Peter and Paul Seminar: A Follow-up by Theologians and Canonists to the Groupe des Dombes's Publication for the Conversion of the Churches", *The Jurist* 64 (2004), 6–20.

3 The conference papers and others written afterwards were later published in *The Jurist*, the journal of the School of Canon Law of the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. See *The Jurist* 71 (2011), 1–90; 271–272; 360–449.

4 See Th. Green, "Selected Legislative Structures in Service of Ecclesial Reform", *The Jurist* 71 (2011), 422–449 (From now on: Green, Legislative Structures).

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diocesan (diocesan synod). Some of these decisional structures are primarily episcopal in character, e.g., episcopal conferences, while others are more broadly ecclesial, e.g., diocesan synods. We will focus especially on their purpose, competency, and membership in fostering institutional renewal in the Church and genuine ecumenical progress. Such participative structures should help to engage more of the faithful in facilitating ecclesial reform.

Not all of these structures have the same potential for achieving such objectives. Hence we will occasionally suggest possible modifications of the law governing them to enhance their effectiveness. Limitations of space preclude our doing any more than offering some general observations on the canonical profile of such entities.[5] However, this should be somewhat informative, especially for non-canonical readers of the *Festschrift*.

2 Some General Thoughts on Institutional Reform in the Church

For Yves Congar, certain attitudes are important in fostering genuine ecclesial reform.[6] First, the reformer should manifest fidelity to the Church in a spirit of charity and attentiveness to the concrete needs of believers. Second, the reformer's remaining in communion with other church members is crucial, focusing on what we hold in common and not what separates us. This spirit is important throughout the Church, especially in ongoing interactions involving the hierarchy and the faithful at large.[7] Third, reformers need to respect patiently the importance of delay at times in achieving their objectives; e.g., a necessary testing of ideas at Vatican II in view of reaching an ecclesial consensus. A key ecumenical task is to repair slowly and patiently what has been broken because of our impatience and narrowness in believing. Fourth, reform depends greatly on a return to the principle of tradition. Individually and corporately we need constantly to explore that tradition, tapping the riches of the past such as scripture, primitive Christianity, patristics, liturgy, popular piety, and evolving doctrinal development under the inspiration of the Spirit.

5 The article mentioned in the prior note explored the various structures more thoroughly than is possible here.

6 See C. Bellitto, "True and False Reform", *The London Tablet* (January 1, 2015) 18–19. For more detailed reflections on Congar's ideas on ecclesial reform, see J. Famerée, "True or False Reform: What are the Key Criteria? The Reflections of Y. Congar", *The Jurist* 61 (2011), 7–19 esp. 9–19.

7 The second part of this article focuses exclusively on such interactions at different levels.

For Christopher Bellitto, too, renewal means striking a 'balance', i.e., restoring to the Church on its pilgrim journey an image of perfection linking its original image with necessary, normal, legitimate growth amidst a somewhat polarized Church. At issue is sustaining a Church that embodies an attitude of 'both and' rather than an 'either-or' approach as a basic context for intra-church and ecumenical dialogue. The reformer is to live as part of a unique body carrying out a unique work with the other faithful. The reformer is to reflect a living, yet not servile, relationship with the hierarchy. The Church needs to reflect a certain dynamic relationship between the centre and the periphery; between the organs of continuity and unity, and the organs of movement and progress. The hierarchy is to ensure that movements of church life flourish and that these movements are integrated within church structures. The hierarchical centre is to ensure that prophetic initiatives are in harmony with the unity of the Church. Ongoing dialogue, especially but not exclusively in its corporate structures, ensures that church authority is in touch with the living currents of the whole body given possible tensions between the centre and grass roots initiatives.

In viewing canon law as a significant vehicle of institutional reform we need to highlight certain points. First we need legal security and stability for good order in the church, yet we also need canonical flexibility and diversity to respond to ongoing political, economic, socio-cultural, and religious changes in the Church and the world.[8] Such good order requires articulating fundamental Christian rights and obligations[9] and making provisions to protect the exercise of such rights[10] and ensure the fulfillment of such obligations.[11] Such good order also calls for the defining of institutions such as the corporate structures we consider shortly, especially clergy-laity relationships.

The aforementioned values are greatly served by various historically-conditioned legislative processes in the Church at all levels. Such processes depend for their effectiveness on various factors; e.g., serious commitment of church authorities, available resources (personnel, financial, institutional etc.), and adequate formation of the Christian faithful.

Such decisional processes call for the diversified involvement of various believers who articulate the theoretical and practical wisdom of the people

8 See Green, Legislative Structures, 424.

9 See, for example, cc. 208–223 specifying various rights and obligations of all the faithful.

10 See, for example, c. 221 on access to judicial and administrative fora to address various concerns and cc. 1732–1739 on recourse against administrative decisions such as consolidating parishes.

11 See, for example, c. 384 on the bishop's supervisory role relative to his presbyters.

of God (e.g., theologians, pastors, canonists, representative members of the faithful) embodying conciliar theological values in response to ongoing pastoral needs.[12] The Church needs regularly to consider the signs of the times in human societies, cultures, other Christian churches, and non-Christian religions.

A particularly significant post-conciliar development has been a closer relationship between canonists and ecumenists – at least in some settings.[13] The former are occasionally called to express structurally shifting ecumenical relationships while fashioning new ecumenical structures. This is necessary for genuine ecclesial *communion* that is more than simply good will without practical institutional ramifications. At issue here is the ecumenical dimension of conversion. A key conciliar development was its ecumenical orientation, articulated briefly as a key ecclesiological motif in the January 25, 1983 apostolic constitution *Sacrae disciplinae leges* promulgating the Latin code.[14] Yet, that text is less ecumenically oriented than the October 18, 1990 apostolic constitution *Sacri canones*[15] promulgating the Eastern code, particularly given the special Eastern Catholic task of engaging in outreach to the Orthodox highlighted in the third principle for the revision of the Eastern code.[16]

The Church's irrevocable commitment to ecumenism is based on doctrine but also on cultivating appropriate internal attitudes ('change of heart'). But such a commitment remains purely theoretical unless it is concretely embod-

12 See J. Renken, "Pope Francis and Participative Bodies in the Church: Canonical Reflections", *Studia canonica* 48 (2014), 209–212 (From now on: Renken, Participative Bodies). For reflections on the call of Francis to the faithful to be in a state of constant renewal, see ibid. 206–214. In this connection four possible themes relevant to decision-making in religious institutes/societies seem pertinent to ecclesial reform. See the somewhat nuanced c. 631 on the diverse purposes of religious chapters, which might be adapted *mutatis mutandis* to the various decisional bodies we will consider: protection of the patrimony of the religious institution or society and promotion of ecclesial renewal, treatment of ecclesially important issues, issuance of binding norms, and a stress on the representative character of the decisional body embodying the values of ecclesial unity and charity that should characterizing policy-setting processes. See Green, Legislative Structures, 447–449.

13 See Th. Green, "Some Canonical Reflections on Ecumenical Issues", *Ecumenical Trends* 39/9 (October 2010), 134–143, esp. 134–5.

14 *Code of Canon Law Latin English Edition New English Translation* (Washington, DC: CLSA, 1989), xxvii-xxxii.

15 *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches Latin-English Edition, New English Translation* (Washington, DC: CLSA, 2001), xxi-xxviii.

16 See *Nuntia* 3 (1976), 20; also Th. Green, "The Latin and Eastern Codes: Guiding Principles", *The Jurist* 62 (2002), 235–279 esp. 256; 268.

ied in legal changes such as a provision for systematic ecumenical and/or interreligious input in our decisional structures, e.g., can 463, 3 on diocesan synod observers. The codes are to reflect the 'newness of Vatican II', helping us receive the conciliar doctrine on our relationships to other churches/ecclesial communities. We have moved from a somewhat negative view of such churches/communities with an emphasis on their institutional deficiencies to a more positive appraisal of their salvific elements, such as a commitment to the Word of God, their spirituality, their sacramental celebrations, and their charitable undertakings.[17]

3 Specific Legislative Structures

After some generic comments on ecclesial renewal, we now focus on several church structures, particularly in terms of their potential for fostering church reform despite the general absence of 'renewal language' in the canons. We will briefly consider a *universal* structure (synod of bishops), two *intermediate or regional* structures (particular councils and episcopal conferences), and a *diocesan* structure (diocesan synods). As noted above, space limitations preclude a detailed structural analysis. However, we will note especially such structures' purpose/competency, functioning, and membership; e.g., their representative, diversified character, whether they are primarily episcopal or broadly ecclesial. These characteristics of such entities may perhaps best help us judge their potential to foster church reform.

Universal Level: Synod of Bishops[18]

a) Preliminary notes – Regrettably no provisions were made systematically to update universal law in the 1917 code despite the intent of Benedict XV (who

17 See M. Wijlens, "'That all may be one …' (John 17:21) The Lord's Prayer in the Work of Canon Lawyers: A Mere Option?" *The Jurist* 65 (2005) 181–2004. See also idem, "Future Paths for the Ecumenical Movement: Canonical Considerations, Challenges, and Contributions", *CLSA Proceedings* (2014), 13–41.

18 See J. Coriden, "The Synod of Bishops: Episcopal Collegiality Still Seeks Adequate Expression", *The Jurist* 64 (2004), 116–136; for pertinent commentaries on the synod, see ibid., 117, fn.1; J. Quinn, "A Permanent Synod: Reflections on Collegiality", *Origins* 31:44 (April 18, 2002), 730–736.

promulgated the code) to do so,[19] and the same is true of the 1983 code.[20] Despite this systematic problem, however, there have been occasional post-code universal law developments in critical pastoral areas such as addressing allegations of sexual abuse and other grave delicts or church crimes.[21]

Given that systematic failure at the universal level to provide for ongoing legislative reform to cope with societal changes, it is interesting that Pope Francis draws attention to evangelization possibilities at that level among others.[22] Even though he does not explicitly refer to legislative development, its pertinence to evangelization seems reasonably clear. For example, one might note the evangelization *potential* of the synod of bishops in addressing marriage and family issues in a rapidly changing society. We will briefly discuss this issue now within the broader context of some observations on the synod.

b) Origins and nature – Before Vatican II, some bishops expressed a desire for a kind of permanent episcopal council in the Vatican enabling the bishops, with the pope, to exercise their authority over the whole Church. Despite initial efforts to draft provisions for such a council, the bishops did not resolve the issue and on September 14, 1965 Paul VI promulgated the motu proprio A*postolica sollicitudo*[23] constituting the synod of bishops. This text significantly influenced the drafting of the Latin code, which treats the synod in canons 342–348.

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19 See Benedict XV, motu proprio *Cum Iuris Canonici Codicem*, in *Codex Iuris Canonici Pii X Pontificis Maximi iussu digestus Benedicti Papae XV auctoritate promulgatus* (Westminster Maryland: The Newman Press, 1964), i-iii.

20 This is true despite a proposal during the code drafting process by Archbishop Joseph Bernardin, the chairman of the American bishops' canonical affairs committee. He envisioned systematically updating the universal law every five years to ensure regular institutional reform. See Green, Legislative Structures, 424.

21 See Benedict XVI, motu proprio *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela.* May 21, 2010: *AAS* 102 (2010) 419–430.

22 See *EG* 32. Francis speaks here generically of a conversion of the papacy in view of more effective evangelization. He also notes par. 95 of John Paul II's encyclical *Ut unum sint* of May 25, 1995 inviting reflection on the papal ministry, especially in view of more effective ecumenical witness. See *AAS* 87 (1995), 977–978. For some thoughtful recent papal reflections on synodality or communion in decision-making at various levels, see Pope Francis, "Speech on 50th Anniversary of Synod of Bishops", *Origins* 45/22 (October 29, 2015), 381–384.

23 *AAS* 57 (1965), 775–780.

The synod as currently structured is not primarily a response to the aforementioned expectations of some bishops for a representative[24] structure facilitating their exercise of supreme power in the Church. Rather it is a structure enabling them to assist the pope in exercising his primatial ministry. It is basically a gathering of bishops from around the world to foster papal-episcopal communion, assist the pope in discharging his universal responsibilities, and discuss pastoral questions arising around the world.[25] In short there is no ordinary means for the college's supreme authority to be exercised as distinct from the extraordinary means of an ecumenical council.[26]

c) Competency – Currently one can realistically speak only of the decisional *potential* of the synod and not of its decisional *competency* given its relatively circumscribed legislative options and its subordination to papal authority.[27] It is not a legislative body but rather a consultative entity, advising the pope and making suggestions which he is free to accept or reject. The synod can exercise deliberative (delegated papal) power only when the pope so endows it and ratifies its decisions.[28]

d) Membership – The synods are divided into three types: ordinary general sessions, extraordinary general sessions, and special sessions. The heavily clerical membership is constituted largely by residential bishops approved by the pope with a focus on elected (ordinary) or *ex officio* (extraordinary) members. Yet the synod also includes selected papal appointees, the cardinal prefects of the Roman dicasteries, elected clerical religious superiors, and some Eastern hierarchs. Some other observers may be invited as well pursuant to special law, e.g., the synod *Ordo*.

e) Possible Canonical Changes – In keeping with papal openness to possible alterations of the synod profile,[29] one might suggest especially enabling the

24 Unlike *CD* 5 the opening canon 342 says nothing about the synod's representative role or its manifesting the *sollicitudo* of the whole college for the Church.

25 See c. 342.

26 See cc. 337–341.

27 See c. 344.

28 See c. 343.The one example of such a deliberative role might be the 1967 synod's approval of ten principles to guide the revision of the Latin code. However, ultimately Paul VI ratified such principles before the Code Commission seriously undertook its work. See *Communicationes* 2 (1969), 77–85.

29 See Coriden, 131. For some helpful bibliographical sources on possible synod changes, see ibid.,136, fn. 43.

synod to function regularly in a deliberative fashion, be it in disciplinary or doctrinal matters[30] This development, envisioned at various times during and since the council, would mean that the synod with the pope could exercise the authority of the college to a certain extent. Such an action would be authoritative even if not reflecting the solemn and full authority of the college mentioned in canon 337 (ecumenical council or bishops dispersed throughout the world whom the pope calls to collegial action).

Among other changes one might suggest are not requiring papal approval of Episcopal membership choices, limiting voting prerogatives to residential bishops with curial representatives serving in a consultative capacity, welcoming representative men and women religious and other members of the faithful, and systematically inviting observers from other Christian traditions and/or non-Christian religions depending on the issues on the synod agenda. This would somewhat reflect the experience of Vatican II, which should be paradigmatic for all ecclesial assemblies. The whole synodal process should be open, in keeping with the values of ecclesial consultation and deliberation, unless the demands of confidentiality are especially pressing in a given case.[31] Finally, after serious discussion, the synodal assembly, along with the pope, should select the topic for the next synod.

Infra-Universal Levels: Intermediate/Regional and Diocesan

By contrast to the absence of systematic provisions for the regular updating of the universal law, the code provides for such possible expressions of ecclesial reform at the *intermediate/regional* (particular councils and episcopal conferences) and *diocesan* (diocesan synod) levels, even though such legislative initiatives may not contradict universal law.[32] Such provisions reflect our ecclesial diversity, which need not necessarily be unity-threatening but, rather, may enhance our internal church mission efforts and our ecumenical undertakings. The more vital the options are for serious legal-pastoral activity

30 See c. 343.

31 Perhaps Francis's approach to the current synod foreshadows some future legal modifications enhancing its status. See, for example, Thomas Reese, "How the synod process is different under Pope Francis", accessed April 6, 2015, at <http://ncronline.org/blogs/faith-and-justice/how-synod-process>), Reese highlights several points somewhat differentiating the current process from its predecessors. Francis strongly encourages the synod participants to speak boldly about their concerns. He approaches the synod discussion inductively rather than deductively. He encourages the participants to build a collegial consensus in the Spirit. All this reflects his lengthy CELAM experience, e.g., his presidency of the 2007 Aparecida, Mexico session.

32 See c. 135 §2 prohibiting lower level legislators from acting contrary to higher level laws.

especially at the intermediate/regional level, the more likely we will be viewed favourably by our ecumenical partners, especially the Orthodox.[33]

Intermediate/Regional Level: Particular Councils (*cc. 439–446*)[34]

a) Preliminary notes – Particular councils may be celebrated at either the national (plenary) or provincial levels; some canons apply solely to one or the other[35] while others apply to both.[36] Such councils have varied historically in such things as their frequency, geographic scope, membership and issues addressed, but they have consistently dealt with doctrinal and especially disciplinary issues and embodied a spirit of ecclesial communion.

Despite their potential for fostering ecclesial reform and their historic accomplishments in this regard, such 'particular' councils were relatively inactive during the pre-Vatican II period. This probably prompted the council fathers to seek their revitalization as expressions of ecclesial communion.[37] For such councils, despite their canonical limitations by contrast to ecumenical councils, still have a great deal of autonomy in adapting legislation to local circumstances. Furthermore, they may well serve doctrinal/catechetical purposes quite effectively in engaging a broad cross section of the faithful in discussing such concerns under episcopal leadership.

However, despite Vatican II's encouragement, particular councils have continued to be relatively inactive. Besides logistical problems in holding them, this may be due largely to the enhanced disciplinary and doctrinal status of episcopal conferences since Vatican II. Despite their less significant legislative competency than particular councils, conferences regularly address liturgical, ministerial, doctrinal, and public policy issues that the councils once considered. In short, at the moment these latter entities contribute relatively little to

33 In this connection see the October 2007 Ravenna statement on ecclesial communion, conciliarity, and authority issued by the international Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_po_2/22/2008, 6–7> (Accessed 6 April 6 2015). See also Paul McPartlan, *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, The Eucharist & Christian Unity* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 1–13.

34 For a brief treatment of such councils, see Green, Legislative Structures, 426–433; for bibliographical references, see ibid., 436, fn. 19.

35 Canons 439 and 441 govern solely plenary councils while canons 440 and 442 govern solely provincial councils.

36 Canons 443–446 apply to both types of councils.

37 See *CD* 36.

ecclesial reform; and the Church is deprived of the possible benefit arising from the insights and experience of such a broad ecclesial assembly.[38]

b) Nature of Plenary Councils[39] – Plenary councils enable the bishops of a conference to deal with issues of faith, morals, and discipline when an absolute majority of its membership with a deliberative vote determines that such a session is desirable for long-range planning or mission-discussion purposes. The council represents a gathering of all the churches of the conference. Unlike provincial councils with their more limited scope, however, the Holy See must approve holding such a plenary council and the bishops' choice of a council president.[40] Along with his brother bishops, he makes the key decisions on its celebration; e.g., electoral procedures, agenda, etc. However, provision should be made for serious consultation of the non-episcopal members in the assembly in shaping the agenda and in making decisions.

c) Nature of Provincial Councils[41] – As is true for the plenary council, there is no set time to hold a provincial council,[42] which depends on the decision of the metropolitan of the province and his suffragans (other heads of dioceses) in light of their perception of provincial legal-pastoral needs. Like the plenary council (and as distinct from the conference), this assembly enables the bishops to address issues within a broad ecclesial context. Such bishops make certain key decisions regarding the celebration of the council; e.g., place, agenda, procedures, etc. with due regard for appropriate consultation. Given the lesser scope of provincial council decisions, however, there is no reference to Holy See determinations regarding its celebration.

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38 Regrettably authoritative documents such as the 2003 apostolic constitution *Pastores gregis*, 62 (John Paul II) and the 2004 directory on bishops *Apostolorum successores* (Congregation for Bishops) 24–27 simply mention such councils but do not strongly endorse their value.

39 See cc. 439, 441.

40 Such a requirement reflects a concern to assure communion with the Holy See and a recognition of the national implications of such council decisions. However, a proper respect for a sound decentralization of governmental processes (EG 16) suggests that the affected bishops should only have to notify the Holy See about such a council without needing its approval. If the Holy See had any concerns it could mention them at that point, but this should be the exception rather than the rule.

41 See cc. 440, 442.

42 This alters 17*CIC*, c. 283 which called for such councils every twenty years. Perhaps the general non-reception of that law led to the current provision for Episcopal discretion regarding the holding of such councils.

d) Membership – Particular Council membership should be viewed from two standpoints: first of all, what members of the faithful *must* be invited to the council and what members *may* be invited, and, secondly, what type of vote do the respective members have: deliberative (participating in the shaping of decisions) or consultative (offering non-binding advice on such decisions).

Generally, a significant ecclesial leadership role seems to be the basis for *mandatory membership*, be it with a deliberative vote, e.g., bishops, or with a consultative vote, e.g., vicars, selected major superiors, university/seminary rectors, etc. Other presbyters and members of the Christian faithful *may* be invited with a consultative vote; yet their number may not exceed one half of the prior group. Furthermore, selected representatives of consultative bodies such as presbyteral councils are to be invited to the provincial (but not the plenary) council with a consultative vote. Finally if the bishops with a decisional vote agree, and it seems ecumenically and/or interreligiously reasonable or even indispensable, it seems to me that others may be invited as *observers*, yet no specific reference is made to non-Catholics,[43] Christians or non-Christians. The aforementioned provisions reflect a much broader view of ecclesial communion than did the exclusively clerical profile of the former code characterizing such council membership.[44]

e) Purposes/Authority[45] – Among the council's key purposes are: organizing common pastoral action and fostering the ministry of the word, sacramental celebration, and good order. Whenever it meets, it has a broad and relatively autonomous governance role, especially legislative in character, with due regard for universal law and the proper role of the diocesan bishop. The council embodies a particular respect for the principle of subsidiarity with its provisions for decentralized governance. Its role is somewhat more noteworthy than the relatively restricted legislative competency of the episcopal conference. While the latter may legislate only if it is explicitly authorized to do so,[46] the council may legislate in any area of the law in keeping with the aforementioned purposes.

Despite differences between particular councils and conferences, there is one area in which their legislative activity is subject to the same higher-level

43 See c. 445, 6. By contrast see c. 463 §3 on diocesan synods, which explicitly mentions the possibility of inviting as observers ministers or members of non-Catholic churches or ecclesial communities.

44 See '17*CIC*, cc. 282; 285–286.

45 See cc. 445, 446.

46 See cc. 455, 456.

constraints, which constraints raise questions in terms of concerns about decentralized governance. Before these corporate structures may promulgate legislation binding the faithful in the country or in the region, they must submit it to the Holy See for its *recognitio* or review; and at times this may even entail the modification of such legislation. There may be various reasons for such a requirement, none of which is spelled out in the code. It may be to foster communion with the Holy See, to ensure technical compliance of particular law with the universal law, to take cognizance of the supra-diocesan (national or provincial) implications of such legislation, or to protect the legitimate autonomy of the diocesan bishop.

While there is much to be said for the legitimacy of the aforementioned observations, one might also raise the question Francis has posed about the possible excessive centralization of church governance in this context.[47] Perhaps the Latin code might imitate its Eastern counterpart and require only that the Holy See normally be simply informed of council decisions as is true for decrees of patriarchal synods and councils of hierarchs.[48] If the Holy See had some concerns in a given instance, it could address them with the pertinent bishops.

Episcopal Conferences[49]

a) Preliminary notes – Such conferences are the key focus of this part of the article given their preeminent public ecclesial position. Unlike particular councils, which go back to the earliest days of the Church, conferences are relatively recent phenomena arising in Western Europe in the nineteenth century when groups of bishops perceived the need to address pastoral-disciplinary issues nationally.[50]

While not regulating such episcopal gatherings in any detail, the former code encouraged consultative sessions of provincial bishops to prepare for future provincial councils.[51] Not surprisingly, given productive experiences of such gatherings during the twentieth century, groups of bishops met together during Vatican II and influenced the drafting of *Christus Dominus* 37–38. These paragraphs expressed a basic juridical profile of episcopal conferences and

47 See *EG* 16.

48 See *CCEO* 111 §3; 167 §2.

49 See EG 16.

50 For reflections on the varied Roman reactions to such gatherings, see J. Provost, "Particular Councils", *The New Code of Canon Law*, ed. Michel Theriault and Jean Thorn. 2 vols. (Ottawa: St. Paul University, 1986)1: 537–561.

51 *CIC* 17, 292.

specified their legislative competency.[52] Furthermore, *Lumen gentium* 23 stated that, like the ancient patriarchal churches that facilitated joint episcopal action, episcopal conferences today could pursue the same goals and enhance the concrete realization of collegiality. Conferences such as the United States conference have experienced certain problems, especially in relationships with the Holy See; e.g., in seeking approval of liturgical translations and in the drafting of pastoral statements on peace, women, and the economy.[53] Despite such ongoing problems, such conferences have been especially significant post-conciliar structures, contributing to the shaping of particular law and thereby fostering ecclesial reform.[54]

During the Latin code drafting process, canonists differed about the episcopal conference's theological status, its doctrinal and disciplinary role, and its relationship to the Holy See and diocesan bishops among others. Its status (especially legislative) was gradually restricted; e.g., in areas of catechetics and finance. *Apostolos Suos*, the pertinent May 1998 *motu proprio* of John Paul II,[55] reinforced the restrictions on the conference's governance role. He indicated that the conference expresses primarily the bishops' collegial spirit (*affectus collegialis*), but he did not speak in detail in terms of their acting collegially in shaping ecclesial decisions (*effectus collegialis*). In fact the motu proprio states that they reflect collegiality only improperly in contrast to ecumenical councils or, to a certain extent, particular councils. We will now briefly consider key canonical dimensions of the episcopal conference.

b) Nature and Purpose[56] – By contrast to particular councils, occasional ecclesial events, conferences are *permanent* institutions which meet regularly, have an organizational structure,[57] and, hence, may foster ecclesial reform more effectively than such councils. The code views conferences as essentially pastoral vehicles with limited governmental competencies. The conferences are to share episcopal insights and experiences, thereby deepening ecclesial communion even while somewhat limiting the autonomy of diocesan bishops.

52 See Paul VI motu proprio *Ecclesiae sanctae* 1:41 requiring conferences throughout the Church: national, infra-national, or supra-national (c. 448).

53 In this latter connection see E. Duffy, "Episcopal Conferences in the Context of Communion: Some Notes on the American Experience", *The Jurist* 64 (2004), 137–167.

54 See J. Martin de Agar, L. Navarro, *Legislazione delle conferenze Episcopali:Complementare al C.I.C.* seconda edizione aggiornata (Rome: Coletti a san Pietro, 2009).

55 See *AAS* 90 (1998), 641–658.

56 See c. 447.

57 See, for example, cc. 457–458.

Whatever the theological-juridical disputes about conferences, the intrinsically collegial nature of the episcopal office seems ultimately to ground the conference theologically; it practically fosters various apostolic initiatives facilitating ecclesial communion.[58]

c) Membership[59] – Two basic criteria ground membership in this exclusively *episcopal* body: episcopal consecration and diocesan leadership. The latter factor affects voting rights. All bishops in a territory are conference members, yet only diocesan bishops and their equivalents[60] enjoy a deliberative competency. Other bishops have a deliberative or consultative status depending on conference statutes, regarding for which they may not vote. The conference is basically a Latin church reality, but ordinaries of other rites may attend conference sessions with their status determined by the statutes.

d) Authority (Legislative)[61] – The conference's legislative authority represents somewhat of a compromise respecting the superior governmental authority of the pope/ Holy See and the diocesan bishop. Two thirds of those bishops with a deliberative vote (not just those at the plenary session or a simple majority vote[62] (c. 119, 2^{0}) must approve a particular provision. Furthermore, unlike the broad competency of particular councils, the conference may legislate only if the code,[63] or a Holy See mandate,[64] explicitly empowers it to do so. The conference may not promulgate its laws without a Holy See *recognitio* or at times *approbatio*. Moreover, and somewhat questionably, at times proposed conference legislation is altered during these processes.[65]

e) Possible Canonical Changes – Some canonists have expressed concerns about post-conciliar developments impairing the ability of conferences to evangelize various cultures and to exercise more effectively the threefold

58 For a thoughtful examination of the theological-juridical status of conferences and a critical appraisal of *Apostolos suos*, see L. Orsy, "Episcopal Conferences and the Power of the Spirit", *The Jurist* 59 (1999), 409–431 (Orsy, Conferences).

59 See cc. 449–450, 454.

60 See c. 381 §2.

61 See cc. 455–456.

62 See c. 119, 2*.

63 For example, see c. 1126 on mixed marriage guarantees articulated by the Catholic party.

64 For example, see USCCB *Essential Norms* on sexual abuse cases.

65 See discussion of problems in *recognitio* process during aforementioned particular council discussion.

munera of Christ, especially governance.[66] Furthermore, the conciliar expectation of a richer conference collegial experience (*LG* 23) has not been fully realized in the absence of a juridical profile of such conferences viewing them as subjects of specific disciplinary attributions.[67] Interestingly enough, for Francis recently[68] and for others, excessive centralization complicates the Church's life, its missionary outreach, and its reform efforts. Therefore we need broader conference legislative options to respond to various pastoral challenges. For example, by contrast, Eastern synods have much broader particular law options and a less restrictive *recognitio* system – a very legitimate implementation of the principle of subsidiarity.[69]

Diocesan level: Diocesan Synod[70]

a) Introduction – Particular churches are called to missionary conversion in diverse socio-cultural settings; the bishop has a key role in engaging various diocesan and parish participative structures in achieving such goals.[71]

Historically, the *diocesan synod* has been an ancient diocesan institution engaging in ecclesial discernment and policy-setting; usually involving the bishop and his clerics. Such synods have experienced periods of growth, especially after higher level reform councils, as well as periods of decline. Surprisingly Vatican II and *Ecclesiae sanctae* said relatively little about such synods even while encouraging structures of communion. However, there has been some post-conciliar activity in various dioceses. The 1983 code somewhat reworked the 1917 code,[72] particularly broadening synod membership beyond clerics, leaving its convocation to episcopal discretion, after consultation with the presbyteral council, and envisioning possible ecumenical observ-

66 In this connection see Th. Green, "The Legislative Competency of the Episcopal Conference: Present Situation and Future Possibilities", *Canon Law, Consultation, and Consolation Monsignor W. Onclin Chair* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2003) 43–98 esp. 93–98. See also Orsy, Conferences. *passim.*

67 In this context 'attributions' means various areas where conference policy governs usually a whole nation, e.g., ministerial formation, clerical personnel policy, sacramental discipline, etc.

68 *EG* 32.

69 For example, see *CCEO* 110 §1; 150 §2, §3.

70 See cc. 460–468; Green, Legislative Structures, 439–447 (bibliography: 439, fn. 50)

71 See *EG* 30–31, especially fn. 34.

72 See '17*CIC*, 356–362.

ers. However, only a 1997 dual dicastery instruction addressed synod issues in detail.[73]

b) Nature/purpose[74] – The synod is primarily an act of episcopal legislative governance although it may undertake other activities such as diocesan pastoral planning. It is also an event of ecclesial communion bringing together clergy, religious, and laity to assist the bishop in articulating a diocesan pastoral vision in the Spirit.[75] Such a significant vehicle of dialogue and reform would ideally meet occasionally in contrast to regularly functioning vehicles of participation such as the presbyteral council[76]

Probably due to the non-observance of the former law requiring synods every decade, the code leaves its convocation up to the diocesan bishop. However, the synod would seem to be a more effective vehicle of ecclesial reform were it to meet more regularly, even given the notable investment of time, energy, and resources it requires.

The bishop's relationship to the synod is paradigmatic for his rapport with other diocesan participative structures; e.g., their convocation, preparation, celebration, and finalizing of provisions, doctrinal or disciplinary. Accordingly, our synodal reflections here may be relevant to other less formal diocesan decisional processes; e.g., task forces, ad hoc committees, etc.

c) Membership[77] – A diversified synodal assembly reflecting various spiritual insights and experiences can well serve the diocese's pastoral good. The synod's tripartite structure includes *obligatory* (chiefly clerics such as bishops, vicars, and representative presbyters) and *facultative* (mixed group) members and possibly observers from other churches or ecclesial communities – which is indispensable in fostering mutual charity, understanding, and possible collaboration. The code is silent about non-Christian observers, but an increasing sensitivity to interreligious issues, especially involving Jews and Muslims, suggests the wisdom of such participation especially in certain ecclesial settings.

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73 See Congregation for Bishops and Evangelization of Peoples, instruction on diocesan synods, July 8, 1987: *Origins* 27/19 (October 23, 1997), 324–331 (Instruction).

74 See c. 460; Instruction 1.

75 See Renken, Participative Bodies, 215; on the doxological, kerygmatic, and pneumatological dimensions of the synod, see Eugene Duffy, "Processes for Communal Discernment: Diocesan Synods and Assemblies", *The Jurist* 71 (2011), 77–79.

76 See cc. 495–501.

77 See c. 463; Instruction 11.

d) Competency[78] – The bishop's exclusive legislative governance role is exercised within a broad ecclesial context. The synod's diversified membership should enable him to tap various levels of expertise, which is indispensable for serious ecclesial reform and a judicious addressing of complex pastoral issues. Yet such synod members need to be provided with appropriate resources to achieve the synod's purposes.

The bishop alone exercises a deliberative role and the synod functions in a consultative fashion, which, however, should not be underestimated. For the synod is not just a legislative institution but a spiritual experience engaging the diocesan church in exploring pressing issues of identity and mission.

Interestingly enough, unlike the prior corporate structures we considered, no Roman intervention is necessary in monitoring the synod's declarations (doctrinal statements) or decrees (legal determinations). Such documentation is to be forwarded to the metropolitan and the conference to foster ecclesial communion and share ecclesial reform ideas and experiences. Yet the bishop's divine law governance status gives him and his diocese a somewhat greater autonomy in this regard than ecclesiastical law entities such as particular councils and episcopal conferences.

Hopefully the preceding reflections on ecclesial reform and various corporate decisional structures will prompt the readers of this Festschrift to consider the canonical possibilities in shaping ecclesial life in positive directions. Hopefully a deeper understanding of the dynamics of such institutional development will enable the Church more effectively to foster the ecclesial reform to which Henk Witte has devoted so much time and energy.

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78 See cc. 466–467; Instruction IV-V.

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CHAPTER 13

A Pneumatological Conversion? The Holy Spirit's Activities According to *Lumen Gentium*

Jos Moons

Modern and contemporary theologians with an interest in the Holy Spirit like Yves Congar and Walter Kasper have expressed their appreciation of the ecclesiology of Vatican II for its pneumatological renewal.[1] In 2002, Walter Kasper spoke of a "new departure [for ecclesiology] through Vatican II", explaining that the conciliar attention to the Holy Spirit corrected a one-sided Christocentric ecclesiology.[2] Two decades earlier, in 1981, Yves Congar too had claimed that the Council 'has begun to restore to us (*rendre*) the pneumatological dimension of the Church'. According to Congar, this restoration manifested itself in the acceptance of charismas, the theology of the local Church, reflection on ministry and *sensus fidei*, and the acknowledgement of the Spirit's activity in the world.[3] Since the Council, many of these topics have been delved into, both by exploring the Council and by reflecting upon its theological intuitions.

Yet the conciliar pneumatology and its renewal has yet to be explored in a fundamental way. For how does the Council (re)imagine the Holy Spirit? What is, for example, the relationship of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son? Or, what activities are attributed to the Holy Spirit? And, how does the Vatican II imagine these aspects in a renewed perspective? The aim of

1 The research for this article is part of my PhD project on LG's pneumatological renewal, supervised by Henk Witte and Karim Schelkens. I am grateful to them for their encouragement and help, and to Niall Leahy SJ for improving my English.

2 See W. Kasper, "The Renewal of Pneumatology in Contemporary Catholic Life and Theology. Towards a Rapprochement between East and West", D. Donnelly, A. Denaux, J. Famerée (eds.), *The Holy Spirit, the Church and Christian Unity: Proceedings etc.* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 9–33, 16.

3 See Y. Congar, "Actualité de la Pneumatologie", S. Martins (ed.), *Credo in spiritum sanctum. Atti del Congresso etc.* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983), 15–28, 16. Cf. the French: "Le deuxième concile du Vatican a commencé à nous rendre la dimension pneumatologique de l'Église, inséparablement en elle-même et dans son rapport avec le cosmos. (…) Vatican II est resté comme à mi-chemin, mais il a ensemencé l'Église de germes vivants, qui ont fructifié depuis. Nous pensons à la place reconnue aux charismes, à une théologie des Églises locales, à un début de considération des ministères, à ce qui est dit du «sensus fidei», à l'action de l'Esprit dans l'histoire du monde".

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this contribution is to advance such fundamental pneumatological reflection and to investigate how precisely the conciliar constitution on the Church (re-) imagines the Holy Spirit.[4]

The Council's pneumatological renewal is a vast area of research. There are sixteen documents. Further, many aspects could be delved into, for example formal aspects such as the number of references, substantial aspects such as the activities of the Spirit and addressees, or Trinitarian aspects such as the relationship between the Spirit and the Father and the Son. In addition there are at least three possible hermeneutical approaches, focusing on context, content or reception of the text.[5]

For practical reasons of time and space this article focuses on one document, *Lumen gentium*, and on one aspect of conciliar pneumatology, the activities linked to the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the article only uses text-focused and theological-historical hermeneutics. First, I will explore what activities are linked to the Holy Spirit in the text of *Lumen gentium*. Secondly, as pneumatological renewal can only be explored by comparison, I will explore the pneumatology of the 1943 ecclesiological encyclical on the mystical body, *Mystici corporis*. Thirdly, I will compare the two documents. How does *Lumen gentium* differ from the 1943 encyclical and what does its pneumatological renewal consist of? In the conclusion, I will evaluate my findings with the help of the notion of (theological) conversion.

1 The Holy Spirit's Activities in *Lumen Gentium*

Before exploring what activities *Lumen gentium* links to the Holy Spirit, three preliminary issues need to be addressed. A first and fundamental preliminary remark has to do with the primary objective of the constitution. Its aim was not to present a pneumatology, but to be a Dogmatic Constitution on the

4 Cf. P. Mullins, *The Teaching of Lumen gentium on the Holy Spirit* (Rome: PUG, 1990); this is still an important work. Cf. also S. Vance-Trembath's thesis, *The Pneumatology of Vatican II: With Particular Reference to Lumen gentium and Gaudium et spes* (Köln: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009); Vance-Trembath promises more in her title than what she actually realises in her work, a minor part of which is consecrated to conciliar documents themselves.

5 Cf. O. Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004). Rush distinguishes three types of hermeneutics, focused on history and the author, on the text itself, and on the receiver. The first of these may be further divided into theological-historical and redaction-historical explorations.

Church. In my discussion of *Lumen gentium*'s pneumatology, I will assume a basic understanding of its ecclesiological context.[6]

A second consideration is more practical. Explorations of *Lumen gentium*'s pneumatology commonly start from the observation that the constitution contains some ninety references to the Holy Spirit.[7] However, one reference may lead to various statements in which various activities are specified. For example, *Lumen gentium* 4 stated that "the Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful … and prays in them on their behalf". This single reference contains in fact two statements, both of which I will investigate.[8]

Finally, I will limit myself to a consideration of those pneumatological statements in which an active involvement of the Spirit is touched upon. This is not without importance, since *Lumen gentium* links the Holy Spirit to activities in three different ways: as actively involved, as passively involved and as involved in an unspecified manner. For example, when article 4 states that "the Spirit guides [the Church] in the way of all truth",[9] the Spirit is described as actively involved. By contrast, the Spirit may also be described as passively involved, as the object of another subject. For instance, there is a double pas-

6 An in depth exploration is beyond the scope of this article. For some basics, see G. Philips, "Die Geschichte der dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche Lumen gentium", H. Brechter (Hrsg.), *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil : Konstitutionen, Dekrete und Erklärungen. Lateinisch und deutsch. Kommentare* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1966), vol.1, 139–155, see 152–153. Also published as "La Constitution dogmatique sur l'Église Lumen gentium", *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 42(1966), 5–39, 33, cf. the *Relatio* to the third draft, see *AS* III/1, 334–335. According to Philips, LG's main architect, LG offers a synthetic ecclesiology with a coherent '4x2' structure.

7 Anne Marie Aagaard counts 91 references, because she includes the reference to the Spirit in the document's concluding formula (common to all documents) that 'Each and all these items which are set forth in this dogmatic Constitution have met with the approval of the Council fathers. And we by the apostolic power given us by Christ together with the venerable fathers in the Holy Spirit, approve, decree and establish it and command that what has thus been decided in the Council be promulgated for the glory of God'. Her article includes a list of these references, see A.M. Aagaard, "Helligånden i Koncildokumenterne. Et Arbejdsmateriale", *Lumen, katolsk teologisk tidsskrift*, 15/43(1972), 54–76, 56. With its 90 (or 91) references to the Spirit, LG is the document with the highest number of such references. According to Aagaard, the Council as a whole counts 263 (or 279) references, see the list on p.60.

8 Additional statements may also be contained in short relative clauses. For example, LG 21's statement that 'the apostles are gifted with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, coming over them' (*ditati … effusione supervenientis Spiritus*) makes three statement on the Spirit, namely that the apostles are enriched with the Spirit, who is poured out (*effusione*), and who comes over the apostles (*superveniens*).

9 Quotations are from the official translation on the website of the Vatican.

sive involvement in *Lumen gentium* 5, where it states that Christ "poured out on His disciples the Spirit promised by the Father". In other cases, *Lumen gentium* does not explicate in what manner the Spirit is involved, such as in the statement that "these [local churches] are the new people called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in much fullness" (LG 26). An exploration of *Lumen gentium* within these limitations reveals that it relates the Spirit to a range of activities. Seven such activities are mentioned three times or more: to sanctify, to vivify, to bring truth, to unify, to give gifts and charismas, to move, and to work in Mary. I will enumerate them briefly here:

First, the Holy Spirit is proposed as the agent of sanctification in *Lumen gentium* 4, 12 and 15, viz. in relation to the Church in general, to the hierarchy and to other catholic faithful as well as non-Catholic Christians. Article four states that "the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church".[10] More implicitly, the Holy Spirit is also said to sanctify in *Lumen gentium* 39, 40, and 41, e.g. when it is claimed that "one sanctity is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God" (LG 41).

Next, the constitution attributes the quality of life-giving (*vivificare*) on numerous occasions (LG 7, 8, 13 and 48). According to *Lumen gentium* 7, the Spirit "gives life to, unifies and moves the whole body [of the Church]", in view of the spiritual renewal in Christ.[11] Moreover, article four defines the Holy Spirit as the 'Spirit of life', specifying that it is the Father who gives life through the Spirit (*per quem*) "[t]o men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through Him, until, in Christ, He brings to life their mortal bodies".

In a third instance, the Spirit is related to truth in *Lumen gentium* 4, 12, 25 and 53, e.g. in the statement that "the Spirit guides [the Church] in the way of all truth" (*in omnem veritatem inducit*, LG 4). His role is further specified e.g. as arousing the sense of faith in the faithful and assisting Peter to speak infallibly. For example, according to article twelve, "the entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One [the Holy Spirit], cannot err in matters of belief. (…) Th[eir] discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth".[12]

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10 According to LG 12, the Holy Spirit 'sanctifies and leads and enriches with virtues' not only through the hierarchy, but also through charismas. According to LG 15, the Holy Spirit works 'with His sanctifying power' in non-Catholic Christians.

11 LG 8 succinctly states 'the visible social structure of the Church serve[s] the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it (*eam vivificanti*), in the building up of the body'. In LG 13, the creed's formula *Dominum et Vivificantem* is quoted, and in LG 48, Christ is said to have sent his 'life giving Spirit' (*vivificantem*), and constituted the mystical body through the Church.

12 According to LG 25, the Spirit – promised to Peter – assists him, so that he speaks infallibly (*assistentia Spiritus*); moreover, the Spirit's *actio* ensures that the Church always agrees

Fourth, the Spirit is said to bring unity in article 4 and twice in article 7. *Lumen gentium* 4 includes in its list of Spirit-related activities that the Spirit "unifies the Church in communion and works of ministry", and article 7 specifies that the Spirit "vivifies, unifies and moves the whole [mystical] body". The latter article further speaks of the 'one' Spirit when stating that "it is one Spirit who divides his gifts" and *Lumen gentium* 13 refers to the Spirit as "the principle of congregation and unity".[13] Moreover, the Spirit is described as indirectly involved in realising unity in articles 15, 25, 32 and 41, e.g. in the statement that "[i]n all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united" (LG 15).[14]

Fifth, the Spirit is said to give hierarchical and charismatic gifts and through them he leads and guides the Church (LG 4, 7 and 12). In article 12 *Lumen gentium* famously states that "it is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but … He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank"; these graces are called charismas later in the same section.[15]

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with the hierarchy's infallible definitions (*propter actionem*), and the 'Spirit of truth' enlightens the Church (the hierarchy?) to keep the truth (*praelucente Spiritu veritatis*). Finally, the Church is said to 'be taught by the Holy Spirit' to honour Mary, LG 53.

13 LG 7 also mentions 'unifying the body' (*corpus unificans*).

14 According to LG 15 the Spirit preserves unity amongst all Christians by raising the desire that all 'be united' in one fold, under one shepherd. LG 25 speaks of the action of the Spirit, by which the unity of the faith is preserved. In LG 32, the discussion on unity amongst diversity of gifts and ministries is concluded with the statement that 'one and the same Spirit works all this'. In LG 41, the unity of holiness (*una sanctitas*) is linked to the Spirit (*In variis vitae generibus et officiis una sanctitas excolitur ab omnibus, qui a Spiritu Dei aguntur*). Cf. LG 49, in which 'having the Spirit' is linked to 'grow into one Church'.

15 LG 4 states that the Spirit "both equips and directs (*instruit and dirigit*) [the Church] with hierarchical and charismatic gifts". See LG 7, "according to His own richness and the needs of the ministries, [the Spirit] gives His different gifts for the welfare of the Church. What has a special place among these gifts is the grace of the apostles to whose authority the Spirit Himself subjects even those who were endowed with charisms". Cf. the gift-related statement in LG 15: the Holy Spirit is said to work "with his sanctifying power, through gifts and graces" in all Christ's disciples; cf. the ministries-related statement in LG 32: the Spirit is said to be the guarantee of the unity of graces and ministries. Cf. also two statements on the Spirit who leads. According to LG 4, the Spirit leads the Church into full unity with Christ (*ad consummatam cum Sponos suo unionem perducit*), and according to LG 43 the hierarchy oversees the religious life under the lead of the Spirit (*duce Spiritu Sancto*).

Sixth, the Spirit is understood as moving people and moving the Church, e.g. in the statement that "[the Spirit] vivifies, unifies and moves the whole [mystical] body" (LG 7). *Lumen gentium* 14 states, in a sub-clause, that the Spirit moves catechumens and thus helps them to "seek with explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church". Finally, *Lumen gentium* 40 claims that "Christ sent the Holy Spirit upon all that He might move them inwardly to love God (…) and each other (…)". Then, in the Mariological chapter of the constitution, the Holy Spirit is said to form Mary into a new creation, and to have overshadowed Mary (LG 56, 59 and 63), for example in the statement in which the Church fathers called Mary "holy and free from all stain of sin, as though fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature" (LG 56). Other activities, finally, mentioned once or twice, include activities such as indwelling and testifying to divine sonship, rejuvenating the Church, compelling the Church to cooperate with God's design, guiding the apostles, and rendering eschatological gifts.

The question that then arises after this enumeration is: what is the significance of these facts? These data indicate at least that *Lumen gentium* conceives the Spirit as involved in the Church both in a concrete and a diversified manner. The concrete nature of the Spirit's involvement is apparent from the fact that the dogmatic constitution articulates specific activities. The Spirit is not in general "the soul of the Church", but rather He brings forth very concrete actions: He sanctifies, gives life, moves, and so on. This diversification of pneumatological activities is apparent from the fact that there is not just one single activity, but seven. And, when studying these passages, the Spirit's activities are interrelated, yet none is deemed more important than the others. This result already implies a critique of Patrick Mullins's claim that the Spirit's mission to "continually sanctify the Church" constitutes the unique core of LG's pneumatology.[16] Rather, one ought to accept that *Lumen gentium*'s pneumatology is multifaceted.

16 Cf. the subtitle of the thesis "The Holy Spirit was Sent at Pentecost in Order that He Might Continually Sanctify the Church". See Mullins, *The Teachings of LG on the Holy Spirit*, e.g. 168, 172–176, 186, 379. Cf. the *Commentarius* in AS II/1, 229–230. For although the section's working title focuses on sanctifying (*De Spiritu Ecclesiam sanctificante*), the following explanation has a wider range, "The Son's Spirit is sent to complete his [the Son's] work, by inwardly vivifying the Church, and by directing and renewing her through various ministries and gifts, until He leads her to her final beatitude".

2 The Holy Spirit's Activities in *Mystici Corporis*

In order to comprehend the particularity of *Lumen gentium*'s pneumatology, a step backwards may offer fruitful insights. Some twenty years before *Lumen gentium*, Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical on the Church as the mystical body of Christ, *Mystici corporis* (MC).[17] Although the encyclical did not exclusively deal with ecclesiology but also included the more spiritual topic of unity with Christ, the latter was always considered within the context of the Church as mystical body. For, as the title reads, the encyclical is devoted to the topic of 'The mystical body of Jesus Christ and Our unity with Christ in the Church (*nostra in eo cum Christo coniunctio*)'. Crucial for my contribution is the fact that *Mystici corporis* gave ample consideration to the Holy Spirit.[18]

Before returning to the question as to which precise activities are linked to the Holy Spirit in the 1943 encyclical, four preliminary remarks are needed. For a start, *Mystici corporis*'s pneumatology, much like the conciliar constitution would be in 1964, was framed within an overall ecclesiological reflection.[19] Secondly, I will not focus on its 71 explicit references to the Spirit, but rather develop an interest in the 118 statements that are developed from these references. Thirdly, within this vast amount of pneumatological topoi, I will limit myself to those statements in which an active involvement of the Holy Spirit is specified. Finally, the official edition of the encyclical does not contain section numbering. For practical reasons, I will refer to the section numbers added to the English translation on the Vatican website.[20]

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17 Pius XII, 'Mystici corporis. Litterae encyclicae (…) de mystico Iesu Christi corpore deque nostra in eo cum Christo coniuncione', in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 35 (1943), 193–248.

18 Some contemporary commentaries noted that this was uncommon for mystical body theology and welcomed it with delight, see e.g. T. Wesseling, "The Encyclical 'Mystici corporis'. Summary and commentary", *Orate Fratres* 17 (1943), 529–537, 535–536 and L. Smit, "De Heilige Geest en het mystieke lichaam van Christus", *Theologische opstellen opgedragen en aangeboden aan Mgr. Dr. G.C. van Noort* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1944), 210–223, 211. For a critical appreciation of MC's pneumatology, cf. J. Moons, "The Holy Spirit in pre-conciliar ecclesiology", *International Journal of Philosopy and Theology* 74(2013), 240–254, 246–247.

19 The notes of Sebastiaan Tromp, who is acknowledged as Pius XII's ghost writer, are very helpful for further exploration. See S. Tromp, "Annotationes", *Periodica de re morali, canonica, liturgica* 32 (1943), 377–401 and 393–395. Cf. the encyclical's later edition with considerable clarifying notes and other additions, S. Tromp, *Litterae encyclicae Pius Papa XII de mystico Iesu Christi corpore deque nostra in eo cum Christo coniunctione «Mystici corporis Christi»*, 3rd edition, text and comments (Tertio edidit uberrimisque documentis illustravit) (Rome: PUG, 1958).

20 Various textual editions add numbers, amongst which is Tromp's, but they all differ.

This said, I can now proceed with an in-depth analysis of the pneumatology of *Mystici corporis.* Although the encyclical uses a broad variety of terms and concepts to describe often similar actions of the Spirit, the following three types of activity can be distinguished.

First and foremost, nine times the Spirit is said to work in various ways in the Church and in souls. For example, article 57 states that "to the members [of the Church] He is present and assists (*adsistit*) them in proportion to their various duties and offices", and that "it is He who, while He is personally present and divinely active in all the members, nevertheless in the inferior members acts (*operatur*) also through the ministry of the higher members".[21] Similarly Lumen *gentium* 63 refers to the Spirit's operation (*operari*) when it claims that "the Spirit of our Redeemer … penetrates and fills every part of the Church's being and is active within it until the end of time (*perpetuo et intime Ecclesiam replet et in ea operatur*) as the source of every grace and every gift and every miraculous power".

On another nine occasions, the Spirit is said to act as both 'inspiring' and 'moving'. For example, the opening article of the encyclical claims that the Spirit moves people and invites them to contemplate the mystical body: "this doctrine [of the mystical body] by its sublime dignity invites all those who are drawn by the Holy Spirit (*homines, quotquot Divino moventur Spiritu*) to study it (*ad contemplationem invitat*)". Similarly, *Mystici corporis* 23 claims that "[sinners] are spurred (*instigantur*) on by the interior promptings of the Holy Spirit (*intimis suasionibus impulsionibusque*) to salutary fear and are moved to (*excitantur*) prayer and penance for their sins".[22] Furthermore, the Spirit is twice said to unify the Church, to offer gifts, to enable the Church to fulfil her mission, and to complete the Church. Mentioned just once are the actions of helping the apostles at the start of their mission, making people into adoptive children of God, ensuring new growth in the Church, covertly leading the Church, and making people resemble Christ, as well as commanding people to

21 See MC 57 (*adsistit*; *in iisdem divinitus agat*; *operatur*; *operationem*). See MC 58, where Christ 'together with the Spirit' is said to give and work gifts (*impertitur … operatur*). See MC 69's adjective clause 'playing his part' (*suas partes agans*). See MC 76, where the Spirit is said to work in the soul (*quaecumque divina a Spiritu Sancto in animis peraguntur*). MC 87 speaks about the 'action of the Holy Spirit' (*Divini Spiritus actioni*), specifying that this action requires our action as well.

22 Further MC 4 speaks about the Spirit who stimulates so that people desire to seek the Kingdom of God (*desiderium, quo Divino exstimulante Spiritu*). MC 68 speaks of the 'interior inspiration and impulse' to holiness (*internus etiam Sancti Spiritus in mentes animosque nostros afflatus atque appulsus*). LG 88 speaks of the Spirit's 'instigation' (*Spiritus Sancti instinctu*) that made the Church introduce the confession of venial sins.

Christ's life, making people lead holy lives and inspiring others to do the same, and pronouncing judgement on the leaders of the nations.

A second range of pneumatological activities contains eight cases where the Spirit is defined as a principle and source. For example, the Spirit-focused reflections in *Mystici corporis* 56 to 58 starts by saying that "if we examine closely this divine principle of life and power given by Christ, insofar as it constitutes the very source of every gift and created grace, we easily perceive that it is nothing else than the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete". Thus the Holy Spirit is more or less identified with "this divine principle of life and power" as well as with 'the source of every gift and created grace'. Similarly, article 57 describes the Holy Spirit in a sub-clause as "the invisible principle [of the body of Christ]", and states that "[to Him] is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the Body are joined one with the other and with their exalted Head". The Spirit is thus described as a principle of unity. The encyclical further explains that "it is He [the Spirit] who, through His heavenly breath of life, is the principle of every supernatural act (*cuiusvis est habendus actionis vitalis ac reapse salutaris principium*) in all parts of the Body". Once more the Spirit is seen as a principle, this time of supernatural acts.[23] In three cases, the image of the source is alluded to by the verb that is being used, such as when *Mystici corporis* 12 explains that Christ, "as the new Adam, might be the source whence the grace of the Holy Spirit should flow unto all the children of the first parent (*Spiritus Sancti gratia in omnes protoparentis filios deflueret*)".[24] As an aside, I might remark that especially in these cases, *Mystici corporis* renders its statements in an indirect manner. For example, article 56 states that "we easily perceive that this divine principle … is the Holy Spirit" instead of "this divine principle is the Holy Spirit". Similarly, the encyclical's subsequent article states that the joining of

23 Further, see MC 57 (*anima*). See MC 62, where the Spirit is called 'another interior principle [of unity]'. See MC 63 (*fons gratiarum, donorum, ac charismatum omnium*). In MC 68 the Spirit is considered – together with the Father and the Son – as the 'most divine source [of unity]' (*Fons autem divinissimus*). In MC 87 the Spirit is called 'a source from which all supernatural power flows into the Church and her members' (*fontem, ex quo superna omnis vis in Ecclesiam in eiusque membra profluat*). Cf. MC 63 (*id tamen, quo*) and MC 68, where the peoples are said to be able to work together for God's glory 'from the power' of the Spirit (*ex illius virtute, qui …*).

24 Further, MC 31 speaks of 'the dew of the Paraclete's gifts', which 'had descended' (*descenderat*) on Israel, and which now 'may water' (*irrigaret*) the Church. In MC 91 'we' (the Catholic faithful) are said to be imbued (*perfundimur*) by the Spirit. Cf. MC 56, '*effusione*'. Cf. MC 33, where the Spirit is said to be coming down without the image of water, to 'descend and remain upon Christ' (*descendentem manentemque super eum*).

the members of the mystical body should be "ascribed to (*attribuendum*)" the Holy Spirit rather than that "the Holy Spirit joins the members".[25]

A third group of activities, according to Pius XII's encyclical, consists of the Spirit's indwelling and presence in Christ (five times) and in the faithful (six times). For example, article 56 includes in its list of the Spirit's activities that "this Spirit delights to dwell in the beloved soul of our Redeemer as in His most cherished shrine". Similarly article 57 indicates that the Spirit is "entire in the Head, entire in the Body, and entire in each of the members (*totus in Capite cum sit etc*)" and that "He is personally present (…) in all members (*per se in omnibus membris habeatur*)".[26]

Once again, the question arises as to what significance these facts may have. What do they communicate about the activities of the Holy Spirit? For a start, they reveal that *Mystici corporis* already considered the Holy Spirit from a multitude of angles. In this case however, a clear stress was laid on his role as ultimate principle or soul, and as an indwelling presence. Further, the pneumatological activities portrayed in the encyclical remain strikingly abstract and unspecified, so that the Spirit's concrete impact is a bit unclear. One may ask what the, admittedly very fundamental, description of the Holy Spirit as "principle of unity" signifies in concrete terms? Does the Holy Spirit bring about unity? And if so, why does the encyclical refrain from explicitly stating this? So, one is left with a somewhat ambiguous picture. Let me then enter into a comparison of the pre-conciliar and conciliar way of dealing with the Spirit's activities.

3 A Renewed Concept of the Holy Spirit?

While exploring Vatican II's alleged rediscovery of the Holy Spirit, I have briefly listed the activities linked to the Holy Spirit in both *Lumen gentium* and in *Mystici corporis*. A comparison of these results may reveal a more nuanced

25 Seven statements are indirect statements. See MC 56, '*facile intelligimus ut*'. MC 57, '*attribuendum*'; '*habendus*'; 'Pope Leo XIII, *significavit*'. MC 63, '*ceu fons …*'. MC 76, '*opporteat*'; MC 87, '*Nemo … infitiari potest*'.

26 For Christ, see also MC 31, where Christ is said to have 'adorned' (*ornavit*) his human nature with the Holy Spirit to make it a suitable instrument for redemption. MC 33 (*descendentem manentemque super eum*). See also MC 48 (*in eo Spiritus habitat*); MC 57, where the Spirit is said to be '*totus in Capite …, totus in Corpore, totus in singulis membris*'. For the faithful, see also MC 57 (*praesens est*; *praesentiam*). MC 78 and MC 80 speak about indwelling (*in animis inhabitationem*, MC 78; *Divino nos inhabitante*, MC 80). MC 57 also specifies that the Spirit does not dwell in those who do not belong to the Church.

comprehension of Vatican II's pneumatological preferences. For a start, it is important to note that the difference between the two documents is not primarily a quantitative one. While *Lumen gentium* has 156 Spirit-statements dispersed over a total sum of 17,500 words (the *Nota explicativa praevia* excluded), i.e. 8.9 per 1000 words, the encyclical of Pius XII holds a total of 118 Spirit-statements in 15,500 words, which offers a rather similar rate of 7.5 words per 1000.

Other than a numerical approach, a qualitative comparison does reveal two major differences related to the various types of activities and to the articulation of the Spirit's active involvement. First, whereas the conciliar constitution lists a wide variety of activities, the encyclical mainly conceives the Holy Spirit as acting as principle or source and as indwelling. These categories link up with Yves Congar's claim that pre-conciliar pneumatology idiomatically considered the Holy Spirit in its relation to the Church's hierarchy and to indwelling[27] – although one should admit that the extensive reflection on the Holy Spirit as principle of grace in articles 56 to 58 does not fall into either category. The second difference lies in the fact that *Lumen gentium* articulates the Spirit's activities in a significantly more concrete manner than *Mystici corporis*. This latter insight is the basis for my further reflections here.

The claim that conciliar pneumatology is developed in a more concrete fashion than it was in the teachings of Pius XII can be substantiated in two ways. First, where *Mystici corporis* uses nouns to articulate the Spirit's involvement, *Lumen gentium* opts for the use of verbs. For example: while both documents link the Spirit to the notion of holiness, the conciliar constitution speaks of *sanctificare* (LG 4, 12) and of 'sanctifying power' (LG 15) where the encyclical rather described the Spirit – together with the Father and the Son – as the source (*fons*) of "the continual sanctifying of the members of the Body". The latter description may be fundamental, but it altogether distances itself from exactly defining the Spirit's active involvement. Similarly, where *Lumen gentium* describes the Spirit as life-giving (*vivificans*, LG 7, 8, 13 and 48) or as 'the Spirit of life' (LG 4), a phrase such as the one in *Mystici corporis* 56 described the Spirit's involvement in a much more abstract manner, namely as "this divine principle of life and power given by Christ".

Another indication that the conciliar constitution has a more specific pneumatology lies in its tendency to specify the context of the Spirit's activities, defining both the Spirit's relatedness to those in whom he acts, and his manner

27 Cf. Y. Congar, *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint*, vol. 1 (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 215–216. For further study of the matter, see E. Groppe, *Yves Congar's Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

of exercising activity. For example, when articles 9 and 15 of *Lumen gentium* describe the Spirit's activity (using both the substantive and verbal forms *actio* and *operare*), the dogmatic constitution also specifies the context of pneumatological activity. Article 9 states that the Church renews herself "under the action of the Holy Spirit", thus linking *actio* with ecclesial renewal. Similarly, article 15 claims that the Spirit operates through his sanctifying power in non-Catholic Christians. Thus the general idea of *operare* is concretized in an ecumenical sense and direction, imbedding the Spirit within a model of ecclesiological inclusivism.[28]

Mystici corporis, then, is much more abstract and significantly less outspoken about the context of the Spirit's work. An exception to this rule is found in section 87, where Pius XII stated that "the heavenly Spirit does not will to effect [holiness] (*operari non vult*) unless they [the faithful] contribute their daily share of zealous activity". Here the general term *operari* was in fact linked to sanctifying and to the faithful, and it was even conditioned by the concrete religious commitment of the faithful. Also in article 57, defining the Spirit as "an invisible principle" a link with unity is given, albeit not in the ecumenical sense it would gain at Vatican II. In most other cases however, the encyclical is far removed from contextually-framed pneumatology. In the same article 57, for instance, this is illustrated by a statement such as:

> [t]o the members [of the Church] He is present and assists them in proportion to their various duties and offices, and the greater or less degree of spiritual health which they enjoy. It is He who, through His heavenly breath of life, is (*est habendus*) the principle of every supernatural act (*cuiusvis actionis vitalis ac reapse salutaris principium*) in all parts of the Body. It is He who, while He is personally present and divinely active in all the members, nevertheless in the inferior members acts also through the ministry of the higher members'.

I quote these three sentences in their entirety, since they overflow with pneumatological references yet remain highly 'theoretical' and never quite define

28 LG uses the following words in the following context: *operatur* in LG 15 (the Spirit sanctifies non-Catholic Christians), LG 19 (those hearing the gospel accept it because of the Spirit's work), LG 32 (unity and diversity in the Church: the Spirit works all these things), LG 44 (the Spirit's working in the Church is shown in the religious life); *actio* in LG 9 ('under the action of the Spirit', the Church renews herself), LG 25 (because of the action of the Spirit, the Church's unity of the faith is preserved); *agit* in LG 50 (the unity with the heavenly Church is realized in liturgy, in which the Spirit 'acts' upon us); *aguntur* in LG 41 (those led by the Spirit strive for one holiness).

the concrete meaning of the fact that the Spirit is present in all, assists, and is a *principium*. In general, *Mystici corporis* leaves it unspecified what the Holy Spirit really does, and indeed concludes its reflection by summarizing the Spirit's activities as being the "soul of the Church". The same type of approach is found in *Lumen gentium* 63, where it is written that "that which lifts the Society of Christians far above the whole natural order is the Spirit of our Redeemer who penetrates and fills every part of the Church's being and is active within it until the end of time as the source of every grace and every gift and every miraculous power".

Yet again, considered within the general framework of conciliar ecclesiology, *Lumen gentium* tends to offer more precise statements, for example where it deals with the Spirit's role in leading and guiding the Church. Rather than simply positing the *factum* of pneumatological guidance, it concretizes the fact that the Spirit directs the Church with or through "hierarchical and charismatic gifts" (LG 12). Further, by stating that Church authority has the duty, "under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (*duce Spiritu Sancto*), of interpreting these evangelical counsels", it makes clear whom the Spirit leads and what for. This stands in contrast to statements by Pius XII, who claimed that (MC 69) "the Divine Redeemer sent the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, who in His name should govern the Church in an invisible way (*arcanem sumeret gubernationem*), so, in the same manner, He commissioned Peter and his successors to be His personal representatives on earth and to assume the visible government of the Christian community". It is specified in relation to whom the Spirit works, namely the Church, but it is not specified how the Spirit undertakes this invisible leading role, or what for.

Yet another example can be offered where both texts use the expression of "the Spirit of truth", where one is struck by the fact that only in the council teaching is this expression specified through three concrete fields of action. The conciliar constitution on the Church clarified that the Spirit arouses the *sensus fidei* (LG 12), enlightens the Church to keep the truth (LG 25), and teaches the Church (LG 53).[29]

29 See MC 56 (*veritatis flamine*), MC 69 and 103 (*Spiritus veritatis*), and LG 12 and 25 (*Spiritus veritatis*). See LG 4, 'the Spirit leads the Church into all truth'; LG 12, the supernatural 'sense of the faith' (*sensus fidei*) is aroused and sustained by the 'Spirit of truth'; LG 25, the 'Spirit of truth' enlightens the Church to keep the truth; LG 53, the Church is said to 'be taught by the Holy Spirit' to honour Mary.

4 A Pneumatological Conversion?

So, a comparison between *Mystici corporis* and *Lumen gentium* reveals that the latter document holds a significantly more concrete view of the Spirit's active involvement in the Church and the world. This difference is all but minor, and it points to an altogether different imagining of the Holy Spirit. Thus, this pneumatological evolution may be linked with what Bernard Lonergan has called 'theological conversion'. Although the notion of conversion is primarily situated in the areas of faith and spirituality, it may be validly used in a theological sense too. Lonergan explains that both theological exploration (*oratio obliqua*) and communication (*oratio recta*) are in need of conversion, that is: they require an openness to change and to being changed, to adopting new horizons and starting from new roots. Only such fundamental openness will enable one to interpret and understand what others have said and are saying, and to communicate it in a comprehensible manner.[30] Often, openness will require a change of course, or differently put: conversion. One is compelled to hear, interpret, understand and speak differently.

The substantial evolution in the pneumatological utterances mentioned above of Pius XII and Vatican II suggest the occurrence of such a conversion in the magisterial discourse between the 1940s to the 1960s. In the analysis above we have detected its fruits, yet we do not know its roots yet. What then makes *Lumen gentium* imagine the Holy Spirit differently? In my opinion, the answer to that question lies first and foremost in the different objectives of both magisterial texts. Clearly, the 1943 encyclical's objective was twofold: on the one hand it aimed at maintaining the institution-focused understanding of the Church as a social-juridical reality as had been traditionally done since the late nineteenth century, while on the other hand it sought to conceive the Church in a theological perspective.[31] Consequently, *Mystici corporis* developed Christ's relatedness to his Church in a twofold manner. It conceived Christ firstly as the transcendent head of the Church, from whom both the historical origin of the Church and its actual functioning depend. Next it developed the nature of the Church as a hierarchical organisation, in which Christ is present in a mediated

30 B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971). See especially pages 127–136, and 267–293. For 'change of horizon' and 'change of roots', see 269 and 271.

31 For these objectives, see MC 9–10. A short and solid introduction into the topic of mystical body theology and MC's reception of it, see E. Hahnenberg, "The Mystical Body of Christ and Communion Ecclesiology: Historical Parallels", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 70 (2005), 3–30, 6–13.

manner, through the hierarchy. Article 40 may serve as an example here, for it tried to reconcile the views that Christ leads the Church through the hierarchy (cf. MC 38) and that He does so directly by himself (cf MC 39). Doing so, the passage distinguishes between an ordinary, visible governing through Christ's vicar, and an extraordinary, hidden governance by Christ himself and thus reveals the consequence of its double objective and the way it is developed. The Christological impact of this type of thinking is important, since Christ is in fact 'banished' to the transcendent realm, where he invisibly governs the Church. His role in the concrete reality of the Church is a mere mediated role, through the catholic hierarchy.[32] The result is also that the encyclical's pneumatology suffered from this twofold orientation in *Mystici corporis*. In the first place, the Holy Spirit – much like Christ – was 'banished' from the centre of reflection. He may act as general 'principle' or 'soul' of the Church, but concrete implications are not drawn, to the effect of a pneumatological marginalization.[33] In addition, due to the encyclical's focus on the biblical metaphor of the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit is often conceived as secondary or at least remaining in the shadow of Christ.[34]

By contrast, conciliar ecclesiology is much less focused on the institutional and structural nature of the Church. Rather *Lumen gentium* conceives the Church primarily from a sacramental and incarnational point of view and develops a deepened sense of the Church as mystery. The institutional aspect is imbedded in this broader perspective (as is clear from the internal order of chapters in the dogmatic constitution on the Church).[35] From the outset, the conciliar constitution stresses that there are not two Christ's, one identical with the hierarchy and one transcendent, but there is one Christ, the light of the people (LG 1). The Church, including its concrete hierarchical aspect, depends on this light and is called to pass it on. This in itself constituted an 'ecclesiological conversion'. The result is that that *Lumen gentium*'s ecclesiology does not 'marginalize' Christ, but rather puts him at the centre.

Strikingly, at Vatican II this Christocentric turn did not come about without including a renewed awareness of the Holy Spirit's role in the Church. This is illustrated at its best when one compares the pre-conciliar draft of the so-called Schema *De ecclesia*, which stood very close to the general theological

32 Cf. Hahnenberg's claim that the encyclical's theological (Christological) understanding of the Church in fact serves to justify prevailing, hierarchical structures, in his "The Mystical Body of Christ and Communion Ecclesiology", 11–13.

33 Cf. the section on the Spirit as the soul of the Church in MC 60–66, especially MC 65.

34 Cf. the introduction of the Spirit-focused sections MC 56–58: an extensive reflection on Christ is followed by a short reflection on the Holy Spirit in which what has been said about Christ is now understood in pneumatological terms.

35 Cf. the short sketch of the connection between the eight chapters by G. Philips.

framework of *Mystici corporis* and upheld a binary theological introduction in which only the Father and the Son are mentioned,[36] with the renewed conciliar schema on the Church that was accepted in 1963. This second draft now contained a pneumatological section which would ultimately end up becoming article 4 of *Lumen gentium*. The redaction history of the conciliar constitution reveals more such evolutions, for instance the increase of pneumatological references in the chapter on eschatology from just one in the September 1964 version to eight in the October 1964 text.[37] All of this makes it clear that the conciliar debate on ecclesiology implied a rediscovery of the role of the Holy Spirit in ecclesiology. Differently put: the council's ecclesiological 'conversion' went hand in hand with a Christological and a pneumatological conversion.

The departure from a pre-conciliar focus on the Church as perfect society, which implied a marginalization of both Christ and the Holy Spirit in ecclesiological discourse, explains why and how Vatican II contains a large number of pneumatological statement which are far more concrete on the Holy Spirit's involvement in the Church, and stretch out ecumenically beyond the confines of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the end, conclusions to all of this are at once moderate and quite real. The particularities mentioned above in *Lumen gentium*'s articulation of the Spirit's involvement in the Church do point to a new pneumatological orientation: other than in the 1940s Vatican II re-imagined the Spirit as having a concrete impact on Church life. Although this pneumatological conversion cannot be denied it does not stand on its own: Vatican II has developed an integrated pneumatology, and therefore the pneumatological conversion necessarily remains tentative and interrelated. It cannot be detached from *Lumen gentium*'s broader Christological and ecclesiological conversion. This, from the viewpoint of pneumatology, holds risks of its own. There are many indications that the Council's renewed pneumatological awareness remained limited, and that Vatican II's strong Christocentric focus has led to a relatively minor role for the Spirit. In the end, one might conclude that the pneumatological changes touched upon in my contribution are best interpreted as a first step toward further pneumatological conversion rather than representing a fully-fledged turnabout.[38]

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36 See *AS* I/4, 12–13.

37 For the old and new text, see *AS* III/5, 49–55. Cf. Bishop Ziadé's sharp critique of the September version in *AS* III/1, 389: "The scope of my note is very simple, how is it possible to discuss the eschatological dimension of our vocation without ever mentioning the mission of the Holy Spirit".

38 Cf. Yves Congar's statement, "Le deuxième concile du Vatican a commencé à nous rendre la dimension pneumatologique de l'Église (…). A commencé, disons-nous. Car, ici comme en beaucoup de choses, Vatican II est resté comme à mi-chemin".

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PART 4

Ecumenical Perspectives

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CHAPTER 14

De Oecumenismo Catholico et de Opere Conversionum: The Relationship between Ecumenism and the Apostolate of Conversions before and during Vatican II

Peter De Mey

In the decade before the Second Vatican Council, Catholic ecumenists like Johannes Willebrands were definitely more familiar with the 'apostolate of conversions' and had to familiarize themselves with the new paradigm of ecumenism. In the paper which the Louvain professor Gustave Thils, on behalf of the Secretariat for Christian Unity (SCUF), wrote in 1961 on *De oecumenismo catholico et de opere conversionum*, we notice how the guidance of converts no longer figures high on the list of priorities for the Catholic Church. Indeed, only one line is dedicated to the apostolate of conversions in the Decree of Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* (UR 4). In the following chapter, we will unfold the reasons why and will end with a short reflection on two important moments in the reception history of the Council.

1 The Slow Transition from Apologetics to Ecumenism within the CCEQ (1952–1963) and the SCUF (1960–1962)

The Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions

One of the most important instruments for promoting a more ecumenical attitude in the Catholic Church in the decade before the opening of Vatican II was the *Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions* (CCEQ). It was the result of an initiative to enhance the quality of the ecumenical reflection among the leading ecumenical centres in Europe by inviting them to participate in annual meetings. The instigators of this initiative were Frans Thijssen (1904–1990) and Johannes Willebrands (1909–2006), both of which were Dutch priests. Between 1952 and 1963, nine such meetings were organized, focusing either on ecumenical themes[1] or on themes related to the reform of Roman Catholic

1 The meetings of Utrecht (1953) and Mainz (1954) were meant to prepare a Catholic reaction on the theme of the Evanston assembly of the World Council of Churches, dealing with 'Christ – the Hope of the World'; and the one in Chevetogne (1957) on a theme proposed by the WCC

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ecclesiology.[2] Its secretary, Willebrands, had in 1948 agreed to become the first president of the *Sint Willibrord Vereniging*, a society to promote ecumenical contacts in the Netherlands, which had come to replace its rather apologetically oriented predecessor.[3]

Especially during its first years, the work of the Catholic Conference still reflected a strong preoccupation with the goal of promoting conversions.[4] The constitution, written by Thijssen and approved during the opening meeting in Fribourg (1952), made a distinction between the 'apostolate of individual returns' and 'ecumenical work', while acknowledging that the ultimate goal

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Division of Studies, 'The Lordship of Christ on the Church and on the World'. The meetings in Paderborn (1956) and Gazzada (1963) also focused on ecumenical themes and dealt with the relationship between mission and unity, and with the ecumenical situation at the time of the Council, respectively.

2 The conference of Paris (1955) focused on the images of the Church and the two meetings immediately preceding the Second Vatican Council dealt with 'Differences compatible with unity' (Gazzada, 1960) and 'Renewal in the Church' (Strasbourg, 1961). On the work of the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions, see: M. Velati, *Una difficile transizione: Il cattolicesimo tra unionismo ed ecumenismo (1952–1964)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996); P. De Mey, "Johannes Willebrands and the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Questions (1952–1963)", A. Denaux, P. De Mey (eds.), *The Ecumenical Legacy of Johannes Cardinal Willebrands (1909–2006)* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 253) (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2012), 49–77; and P. De Mey, "L'évolution théologique et œcuménique de la 'Conférence Catholique pour les questions œcuméniques' (1952–1963)", L. Declerck (ed.), *Mgr J. Willebrands et la Conférence catholique pour les Questions œcuméniques: Ses archives à Chevetogne* (Instrumenta Theologica, 39) (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 7–39.

3 Cf. J. Jacobs, *Nieuwe visies op een oud visioen: Een portret van de Sint Willibrord Vereniging* 1948–1998 (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 1998). In his contribution to the final meeting in 1963, "Un aperçu et une évaluation critique du développement œcuménique dans les Pays-Bas", Thijssen does not believe that the change of paradigm has been entirely successful: "L'unité des chrétiens ne peut être promue qu'en promouvant sa propre véracité et catholicité. Celle-ci ne peut plus être conçue sans la considération du monde chrétien séparé, qui a conservé des éléments de l'héritage chrétien, pour nous en servir pour notre propre correction. A cette fin le dialogue est un moyen providentiel. La conversion individuelle elle-même doit être vue dans la lumière de cette réalité œcuménique croissante. Jusqu'ici on n'a pas encore réussi, dans l'association St. Willibrord, à trouver une harmonie entre ce double développement" (3). See also: Henk Witte, "Willebrands en de pastores convertiti", A. Denaux (ed.), *De Nederlandse Jaren van Johannes Willebrands (1909–1960)* (Willebrands Studies 2) (Bergambacht: 2VM, 2015), 83–114.

4 The evolution of Willebrands in this regard is similar to that of other hierarchs in the Catholic Church. Cf. R. Burigana, G. Routhier, "La conversion œcuménique d'un évêque et d'une Église: Le parcours œcuménique du cardinal Léger et de l'Église de Montréal au moment de Vatican II. I. Les premiers ébranlements; II. L'engagement résolu", *Science et Esprit* 52 (2000), 171–191; 293–319.

remains the same: "the case of individual returns only often appears to be less complicated than that of collective return".[5] In his opening discourse, Father Willebrands also seemed to promote the work of conversions, referring to the case of Johannes Michael, a former German Protestant theologian: "Conversion is the return of a person who lived only from one part of the revelation to the totality of the *paradosis* in order to live from now on in the plenitude of Christ".[6] One year later, while being himself the host of the conference, as president of the Major Seminary of Warmond, he invited Coadiutor Bishop Alfrink to address the participants. The bishop focused especially on the importance of the apostolate of converting non-Catholics, which in his diocese resulted in 1000 conversions a year.[7] The reaction of Father Villain from Lyon is worth quoting in full:

> What a surprise and what a shock! "We too, we are engaged in ecumenism," the Church hierarch mentioned right from the outset. But about which ecumenism did he speak? The answer came as from the second phrase. It pertained to converting Protestants, starting with their pastors, and the speaker exposed in great detail the different methods of conversion which were used in the archdiocese. I was seated in between Father Congar and Father Dumont. At each new strophe we bowed our heads a bit more. Finally, my head touched my knees.[8]

In the conclusion of Willebrands's opening speech during this conference, the speaker feels obliged to defend the ideal of ecumenism as *Rückkehr* in response to an objection made by the Dutch Reformed theologian Arnold van Ruler (1908–1970), who had stated: "Rome wills ecumenically not a conversation, but submission and return to the only true Church". Willebrands's answer:

5 "Projet d'un Conseil Catholique Œcuménique" (F. Willebrands Chevetogne), 6. In this paper I make use, with thanks to my hosts, of the Fonds Willebrands (Monastery of Chevetogne), the Fonds De Smedt and the Fonds Philips (Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, KULeuven), the Fonds Moeller and the Fonds Dupont (Centre Lumen gentium, UCLouvain) and the Fonds Stransky (St. Paul's College, Washington DC). In the body of this chapter, I have translated quotations from other languages into English.

6 J. Willebrands, "Introduction à la conférence catholique œcuménique de Fribourg" (F. Willebrands Chevetogne), 5.

7 "Introduction à la conférence de Dijnselburg par S. Exc. Mgr. B. Alfrink. 6 août 1953" (F. Willebrands Chevetogne).

8 M. Villain, *Vers l'unité: Itinéraire d'un pionnier 1935–1975*, Lyon, *s.d.*, 208, as quoted in Velati, *Una difficile transizione*, 59.

> We want a conversation in complete freedom, we want submission and return in complete freedom, and only when the returning brother has in free conviction, and free choice, and in the light of faith, come to the insight that Rome is truly ecumenical; the pillar of truth which comprises everything and everyone.[9]

The Secretariat for Christian Unity

In the years before the Council, among the staff members and consultors of the Secretariat for Christian Unity,[10] there equally was no consensus upon the precise relationship between the goal of the apostolate of conversion and the work of ecumenism. According to Mauro Velati, we should not be surprised to still find astute defenders of conversion and return, since the return of the 'dissidents' to Rome had been a major goal during the pontificate of Pope Pius XII, fostered by unionist movements such as the Rome-based *Foyer Unitas*, and by religious congregations in the United States such as the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, and the Paulist Fathers.[11] Cardinal Bea had even deliberately avoided using the term 'ecumenical' in the name of the new Secretariat, which at the outset was often translated in Italian as the secretariat 'per l'unione'.[12]

During the first plenary meeting of the Secretariat in November 1960, ten sub-commissions were created that would prepare texts and *vota* on different themes. The third sub-commission had to deal with the theme, *De conversionibus individualibus et de conversione communitatum: Conditiones ponendae.* When in August 1961 the number of sub-commissions was being enlarged to fifteen, the goal of the third sub-commission was redefined: "a) *De oecumenismo catholico et de opere conversionis*; b) *De ministris acatholicis qui catholici*

9 Willebrands, "Einleitung zur katholisch-oekumenischen Konferenz von Dijnselburg Holland, 6–9 August 1953" (F. Willebrands Chevetogne), 10.

10 For the full list and some background on each person, see: Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento: Verbali e testi del segretariato per l'unità dei cristiani nella preparazione del concilioVaticano II (1960–1962)* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011), 103–110.

11 Ibid., 25–35 ("Tra Pio XII e il concilio"). A letter that the young Paulist Father Thomas Stransky sent to the Belgian Dominican Jérôme Hamer on February 20, 1961, is very revealing in this regard: "On the whole, I think our *methods* of attracting non-Catholics to take instruction are authentic and valid. (…) Much of this concern *only* for convert work is changing, but it still is by far the predominant one. Hence, the importance of showing: 1. exactly how ecumenism and direct convert-work differs from one another, yet harmonize in the general Mission of the Church. 2. how the laity should be instilled with a desire to bring *individuals* into the Church, as well as groups. 3. how authentic "proselytism" is not something to be shunned, but *must* be done" (ibid., 30–31).

12 Ibid., 25.

facti sunt et de eorum conditione relate ad Ordinis sacramentum recipiendum".[13] In 1960, this sub-commission consisted of Msgr. Joseph Höfer (1896–1976) of Paderborn, Msgr. Henry Davis (1903–1987) of Oscott College, Birmingham, Paulist Father James Cunningham (1901–1994), and Father Edward Francis Hanahoe (1913–1994) of the Franciscans of the Atonement.[14] In 1961, the group was enlarged – in an attempt by secretary Willebrands to achieve a better balance among the ideological differences – with the Louvain professor Gustave Thils (1909–2000) and the German Oratorian Werner Becker (1904–1987).[15] Among the achievements of this sub-commission, I will only focus on Thils's report, *De oecumenismo catholico et de opere conversionum* (which, despite its Latin title, was written in French), and thereafter will briefly remark upon Hanahoe's report, *De modo unionis Protestantium*. Both reports were presented during the fourth plenary meeting in August 1961.[16]

Before speaking about ecumenism and its urgency, the Louvain theologian begins with a reflection on the term 'ecumenicity' which he understands as a form of 'universality', even though he explained in the discussion of this text that he actually now preferred the term 'catholicity'.[17] Drawing on the approach to the catholicity of the Church in Congar's *Chrétiens désunis*,[18] he finds it important that the 'quantitative' or 'geographic' dimension of univer-

13 Ibid., 97–98.

14 Ibid., 173.

15 Ibid., 511.

16 Even if Thijssen was asked by Willebrands to collaborate to the drafting I take the document "De Oecumenismo Catholico et de opera conversionum" (ibid., 542–549) to be largely the work of Thils. Cf. De Mey, 'Gustave Thils and Ecumenism at Vatican Council II', in *The Belgian Contribution to the Second Vatican Council. International Research Conference at Mechelen, Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve (September 12–16, 2005)* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 216), D. Donnelly et al. (eds.), Leuven: Peeters, 2008, 389–413, partim.

17 Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 551.

18 Y. Congar, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion* (London: G. Bles, 1939), 93–114. Congar distinguished 'quantitative' from 'qualitative catholicity' and concludes that 'the very idea of catholicity involves the relation of diversity to unity and of unity to diversity' (ibid., 99) He then, however, made a distinction between 'catholicity' and 'ecumenism' which Thils (and probably Congar neither in the 1960s) will not repeat in exactly the same terms: "Apart from the embodiment of unity there might be 'oecumenism', but not true catholicity. For catholicity is the taking of the many into an already existing oneness. Whereas what is to-day called 'oecumenism' is the introduction of a certain unitedness into an already existing diversity – oneness in multiplicity. (…) In other words, there may be, and there is, a non-Roman 'oecumenism' – there can indeed be no other. But there cannot be a 'non-Roman Catholicity'".

sality/catholicity is complemented by a 'qualitative' one that can function as a negative and as a positive criterion. In Thils's opinion, the Church "is not bound to any particularism of rite, liturgy, theological form, disciplinary custom, etc.", but, positively formulated, "she can perfectly integrate a plurality of rites, liturgies, theological forms and disciplinary tradition".[19] The Catholic Church should apply the same catholicity that she has learned to practise while being in full communion with the Eastern Catholic Churches, in her contacts with "all the separated Christians". She should, therefore, "consider this plurality as a richness, a desirable value, a good to be pursued, in view of the full realisation of this form of universality which is ecumenicity".[20]

When reflecting on the nature of ecumenicity, Thils insists that this is the gift of Christ to his Church, yet it is also a gift 'susceptible to growth'.[21] Even if it is his conviction that the other Christian churches not only need to obey 'divine law' but also 'ecclesiastical law', Acts 15:28 inspires him "to legitimately ask whether, in order to remain faithful to the spirit of the apostles, one should not avoid imposing on the separated Christians what is not indispensable and to let them enter into the Lord's house with all their proper traditions, even if they were less perfect and developed in a way which is less appropriate".[22]

As a result, he is then ready to define ecumenism as "all the efforts that make effective the realisation of ecumenicity as well as all concrete examples of these efforts: personal steps, common initiatives, works and studies, institutions and meetings and even movements and groups".[23] The balance that Thils sees between, on the one hand, the work of ecumenism and, on the other, the apostolate of conversions, becomes clear when one observes that the latter is only treated at the end of his paper and comprises of only one page. A footnote makes it clear that he prefers to speak about "Ecumenism and the personal union with the Catholic Church" and to avoid the term "conversion, since, in this context, it is sometimes inadequate and often ambiguous".[24] According to Thils, the Spirit sometimes moves people to unite themselves to the Catholic Church in her current shape, and others who – even while still remaining in their own communities – strive to enhance "the ecumenicity of the Catholic Church, so that she can more clearly become the home of all their separated brethren". He is convinced that, "when Christians of the second group unite

19 Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 543.

20 Ibid., 544.

21 Ibid., 544–545.

22 Ibid., 546.

23 Ibid., 547.

24 Ibid., 549.

themselves personally to the Catholic Church, they represent for her a ferment of incomparable ecumenicity".[25]

Thils became a member of the Secretariat for Christian Unity after the founding General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Willem-Adolf Visser 't Hooft (1900–1985), had praised the quality of his *Histoire doctrinale du mouvement œcuménique*, published in 1955.[26] The learning experience of his collaboration with the work of the Secretariat encouraged him to thoroughly revise this book for the 1963 second edition. The section on *Œcuménisme et conversions* is entirely new[27] and explores the work of 'conversion' or 'incorporation' – work that he deems legitimate and extremely valuable in a missionary context – and the work of 'ecumenism', as two "distinct, but not opposed activities". So he defines these two works in the following way:

> There is 'incorporation' or 'conversion'[28] when 1) a Christian (or a group of Christians) passes over to the Catholic Church, 2) because he finds in this passage the concrete solution to a personal religious problem concerning the true way of eternal salvation, 3) without aiming directly or expressly at the exercise of any form of influence, either on the community from which he comes or on the Catholic Church into which he is incorporated (even if, as is evident, he always necessarily exercises a certain degree of influence de facto).[29]
>
> There is 'ecumenism' when 1) a Catholic and a non-Roman Christian (or, again, a group of Catholics and a group of separated Christians) meet and engage in dialogue; 2) when they are in at least a certain way representative for their respective communities (be it through their 'Catholic' or 'Lutheran' way of life or through their theological knowledge, or by virtue of a delegation received by their ecclesiastical authorities); and thus 3) in view of knowing one another better and developing a higher

25 Ibid., 548.

26 G. Thils, *Histoire doctrinale du mouvement oecuménique* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, 8) (Louvain: Warny, 1955).

27 G. Thils, *Histoire doctrinale du mouvement œcuménique. Nouvelle edition* (Louvain: Warny, 1963), 292–296.

28 Because 'conversion' seems to presuppose a moral necessity, it is, in Thils's opinion, "sometimes used in such an inappropriate way that one can ask whether truth and equity do not require us to proscribe it as a common theological formula" (ibid., 293). "Incorporation" is maybe not the best alternative, since in *Lumen gentium* it will be used rather to describe how non-Catholic believers, through their baptism, also form part of the body of Christ.

29 Ibid., 292.

> esteem for one another, living together in a more agreeable way, collaborating and praying together when circumstances permit, reflecting together on the shape of their community and striving to make the doctrinal equilibrium of their respective communities more clear and vital and its physiognomy more beautiful; 4) which will evidently result in something good for the union of Christians.[30]

Finally, Thils gives a very nuanced answer about the goal of ecumenism, in which the abuse of ecumenism for apologetic purposes is clearly rejected:

> Can one say that the final goal of ecumenism is the unity of all Christians in the Catholic Church? *No*, if one understands by this that ecumenism is a tactical means to achieve the conversion of the interlocutor, by feigning encounters and dialogue. One must be fair and loyal. The ecumenist accomplishes a specific and valuable task, which is formally distinct from that of 'conversion'. *Yes*, if one wants to say that the final goal that Catholics envisage in all ecumenical endeavours, is the acceptance by all Christians of Catholic ecclesiology and, as a consequence, the union of all in the Catholic Church, but a Catholic Church with a new shape, as Vatican II made clear, *i.e.* with a vital new equilibrium, a new doctrinal equilibrium, a renewed physiognomy, in short: in the spiritual fullness of a catholicity that has been perfectly spread.[31]

A quick glance at Father Hanahoe's report, *De modo unionis Protestantium*, makes it clear that the Secretariat for Christian Unity was not just composed of theologians with a great enthusiasm for ecumenism because Father Hanahoe does not even mention the term ecumenism one single time. He only speaks about "reconciliation with the Catholic Church" by individual Protestants or by

30 Ibid., 294.

31 Ibid., 296. The position of Thils is not much different from the *Votum de oecumenismi*, submitted by Congar to the Theological Commission on October 27, 1961 (F. Philips 234). Cf. ibid., 5: "Oecumenicus motus ad unitatem in fide, cultu, socialique vita … *ab omnibus*, Catholicis non exceptis, requirit integram conversionem ad Evangelium, ad puritatem simul ac plenitudinem Evangelii. Oecumenismus requirit, non minus, sed plus fidei amorisque. Non procedit via minimi, sed maximi. Unitas erit *re-unio* Separatorum in sinum Ecclesiae. Sed nec reditus nec reunio erit nisi ad Ecclesiam quae seipsam praeparaverit, quae seipsam large et strenue reformaverit ad typum evangelicum. Nonne haec sit via a Summo Pontifice Papa Ioanne XXIII delineata? Nonne hoc sit Oecumenici Concilii propositum?"

groups of Protestants (*coetus Protestantium*).[32] In fact, because private judgement in religious affairs is a great value in Protestantism, he cannot imagine a corporate union of Protestants with the Catholic Church otherwise than by way of "individual conversion".[33] The author also reflects on the validity and desirability ordaining married Protestant pastors for the diaconate or the priesthood after being received into the Catholic Church. In theory, there is no objection and it would also encourage Protestant pastors to convert if they were able to continue their pastoral ministry in some form. Father Hanahoe, however, also enumerates many practical difficulties.[34]

Whereas the exchange of views on the report prepared by Thils was a very peaceful one in which Cardinal Bea even repeated approvingly a key idea of the Louvain theologian,[35] Hanahoe received immediate strong criticism from Hamer:

> The work of conversions is a work to be pursued but, apart from the work of conversions, there is the work of ecumenism. (…) Ecumenism, as Prof. Thils has explained, is an aspect of the manifestation of the universality of the Church. If one may not forget conversions, one should also not forget ecumenism.[36]

Maybe because of the immediate response by Hanahoe – "these are different activities, but they have the same goal"[37] – Willebrands tried to conclude the debate in a reconciliatory mode: "The work of conversions and the ecumenical work are complementary, but we need a profound study to precisely establish their relations".[38]

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32 Velati, *Dialogo e rinnovamento*, 261–262.

33 Ibid., 563.

34 Ibid., 565.

35 Ibid., 552: "Beaucoup d'autorités dans l'Église ont horreur de ce vocable. C'est pour cela qu'il faut tenir que l'œcuménicité est une note essentielle de l'Église".

36 Ibid., 569. Bishop De Smedt and Gregory Baum reacted in a similar way: "S.E. Mgr. De Smedt souligne que l'on ne doit pas surseoir aux conversions. Plus nous nous occupons d'œcuménisme et plus nous devons souligner la nécessité des conversions. Il y a tellement de prêtres qui voltigent aujourd'hui avec légèreté autour de ces questions"; R.P. Baum: "L'œuvre de conversions qui est si nécessaire dans certains pays, doit être influencée par la pensée œcuménique, autrement cette œuvre des conversions est inspirée par des arguments qui ont peu de force de conviction, en présentant l'histoire sous un jour favorable et en passant sous silence les faiblesses et les difficultés". Cf. ibid., 571–572.

37 Ibid., 569.

38 Ibid., 572.

2 "Each Proceeds from the Marvellous Disposition of God": The Redaction History of the Section on the Relationship between the Work of Ecumenism and the Apostolate of Conversions in *Unitatis Redintegratio*[4]

Ecumenism and Conversion in the Three 'Ecumenical' Texts at the First Session

We start with the draft for a decree *De oecumenismo catholico* that did not find its way to the Council Fathers during the first session of the Second Vatican Council, the one prepared by the Secretariat for Christian Unity and comprising only four paragraphs. The final draft was completed in July 1962 after taking into account the remarks that the Central Preparatory Commission had made.[39] The Coordinating Commission, however, decided that only drafts prepared by one of the conciliar commissions could be discussed *in aula*. At this point, the internal debate within the Secretariat concerning how to promote ecumenism without neglecting the work of conversions seems to have been 'solved'. Their draft makes no mention at all of separated Christians entering into communion with the Catholic Church, but instead focuses on 'ecumenical' work. Most of the paragraphs of the later Chapter Two of the Decree on Ecumenism, dealing with 'The practice of ecumenism', are here discussed in two paragraphs: one dealing with activities that can be exercised together with our separated brothers – dialogue, prayer, collaboration (§ 3) – and the final paragraph that focuses on "Particular activities within the Catholic community itself". This concluding paragraph specifically mentions "the interior renewal of the Church, the need "to manifest more fully the note of catholicity", and, in the end, it uses the term conversion in a different sense: "There is no true ecumenism without the conversion of the heart" (§ 4).

The draft prepared by the Oriental Commission and entitled *Ut omnes unum sint*,[40] consists of 52 paragraphs. When it starts, as in article 11, to describe "The works of the Church in view of the restoration of unity", the focus is on the work of ecumenism, not on the apostolate of conversions, but ecumenism clearly understood as the return to the Catholic Church. For this work

39 Ibid., 825. This document has been published in *Acta et documenta concilii oecumenici Vaticana II apparando – Series II Praeparatoria* (Vatican City, 1969–1995), vol. 4, 785–792. A very helpful study of all three documents, including a translation in French, is found in Christophe-Jean Dumont, "La genèse du décret sur l'oecuménisme", *Istina* 10 (1964), 443–466.

40 "Schema decreti de Ecclesiae unitate *Ut omnes unum sint*", *Acta Synodalia* (AS) I/3, 528–545.

"supernatural means" (art. 13–17) are necessary (such as prayers and internal renewal), "theological means" (art. 18–22), "liturgical means" (art. 23–26), "canonical or disciplinary means" (art. 27–28), "psychological means" (art. 29–37) and "practical means" (art. 38–47). In this final subsection, the bishops are asked "to stimulate, lead and develop ecumenical action" (art. 39) and all the faithful are exhorted "to procure the return of their separated brethren to Catholic unity by their words, their activity and especially their prayers" (art. 43).

Chapter 11 of the draft of the dogmatic constitution *De Ecclesia*, prepared by the Theological Commission, is entitled *De Oecumenismo.*[41] Two paragraphs describe "The relationship of the Catholic Church to individual separated Christians" (art. 50) and "The relationship of the Catholic Church to separated Christian communities" (art. 51), respectively. Because it assumes that the other Christian churches and communities are deficient as regards the means of grace and unity, the Catholic Church "looks with maternal love upon them individually and lovingly invites them to herself" (art. 50). Still, the Theological Commission has great esteem for these communities because, in them "there are certain elements of the Church, especially the Sacred Scriptures and the sacraments, which, as efficacious means and signs of unity, can produce mutual union in Christ and by their very nature, as realities proper to Christ's Church, impel towards Catholic unity" (*quae, ut res Ecclesiae Christi propriae, ad unitatem catholicam impellunt*) (art. 51).[42] Section 52 is thematically con-

41 I make use of the translation made by J.A. Komonchak, *Draft of a Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, at <https://jakomonchak.wordpress.com/2013/07/27/draft-of-a-dogmatic-constitution-on-the-church/> (Accessed 19 December 2015)

42 One thus observes that the most famous line in *Lumen gentium*, assuring Catholic faithful that, on the one hand, they can find "the Church of Christ" in their own Church, while, at the same time and on the other hand, inviting them to take part fully in the ecumenical movement; since "outside its structure many elements of sanctification are to be found which, as proper gifts to the church of Christ, impel us towards catholic unity" (*quae ut dona ecclesiae Christi propria, ad unitatem catholicam impellunt*) (LG 8), is only partially the work of the mature Council. It remains actually remarkably faithful to the schema, *De ecclesia*, presented by the Theological Commission. Read together with the previous § 50, it is highly probable that most members of this commission will have understood 'Catholic unity' to refer to the unity found in the Catholic Church. Thus, they probably understood the term in the same way as Congar had done in *Divided Christendom*: "The goal of an authentic reunion movement must be Catholic unity; the unity, that is, of the fullness of the mystical Christ. It must therefore be concerned with reintegration in the *Una Catholica"* (Congar, *Divided Christendom*, 252). Not all of them will have agreed with the much more nuanced account of 'Catholic unity' that Congar wrote down in his *Réfléxions soumises à la Commission Théologique*, in response to his nomination as consultor to the

nected to the two previous paragraphs and describes "the relationship of the Catholic Church to the ecumenical movement outside the Church". This movement receives a considerable amount of praise. At the same time, however, one repeats the three conditions for unity, derived from Bellarmine's *De Controversiis*, but here ascribed to the will of Christ, implying that those working for ecumenism in other Christian churches must become aware of the need to return to the Catholic Church:

> But if it is to conform to Christ's will, this manifestation of unity must be strictly shaped in accordance with the same Christ's will, in unity of faith, sacramental communion, and government. Those, therefore, who seek to obey Christ's will with all their hearts and to grow in their degree of "ecumenicity," must, led by the Spirit of Christ, draw closer and closer to that Church which, although it is a single and indivisible house of God, still rejoices in its many mansions all over the world, in unity of faith, government and communion beneath the one Vicar of Christ.

Theological Commission (24/09/1960): "By this very fact we would have and we would present a dynamic notion of the unity of the Church, that is, a notion oriented towards the catholic unity, in perpetual growth, which is the goal of missionary efforts. Too often the Church's unity is presented only as an already fashioned framework which one must enter and remain in. This is not wrong, but it is insufficient. Unity is ceaselessly to be achieved an promoted, as much on the level of the universal Church as on that of parishes or local communities. This point has great pastoral importance". (*Congar's Initial Proposals for Vatican II*, at <https://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/congars-plan-for-the-council.pdf> (Accessed 19 December 2015), 5) Maybe 'Catholic unity' is one of these expressions found in the documents of Vatican II of which the interpretation has been deliberately left open in order to allow for many possible interpretations (and thus making more Council Fathers ready to vote in favour of the documents). I am, therefore, no longer sure of the claim I made in an earlier article on the interpretation of the same expression in LG 13, that 'Catholic unity' was definitely not the unity only to be found in the Catholic Church, but a characterization of the eschatological outlook of the Church of Christ, and thus unity in reconciled diversity. Cf. De Mey, "Eenheid in verscheidenheid. Het katholiciteitsbegrip van Vaticanum II," P. De Mey, P. De Witte (eds.), *De 'K' van Kerk. De pluriformiteit van katholiciteit* (Antwerpen: Halewijn, 2009), 31–46. See also H.P.J. Witte, "Orthodoxie en katholiciteit", F.A. Maas, H.P.J. Witte, P.J.A. Nissen (eds.), *Orthodoxie en bekennend geloven* (Tilburg: Faculteit Theologie en Religiewetenschappen, 2006), 25–49.

The Debate on Ecumenism and Conversion during the Second Period and Intersession

Because the Council Fathers were not particularly enthusiastic about the draft on ecumenism presented by the Oriental Commission, it was decided that a mixed commission would make a synthesis of the separate documents prepared by the Oriental Commission, the Theological Commission, and the Secretariat for Christian Unity. Since the Oriental Commission was very unwilling to cooperate, Mauro Velati is right to mention about this draft that, "a text elaborated by the Secretariat could finally arrive in the hands of the fathers of the council".[43] As was the case with the draft prepared by the Secretariat for Christian Unity one year earlier, the first chapter does not yet mention the work of conversion. The chapter dealing with the practice of ecumenism now starts with two paragraphs that are almost identical with the 1962 draft, dealing with "The internal renovation of the Church" and "The conversion of the heart".[44]

The presentation of the new draft to the Council Fathers on November 18, 1963, was accompanied by three reports. Maybe in order to anticipate questions about the absence of a passage on the apostolate of conversions, Joseph Martin (1891–1976), the Archbishop of Rouen and member of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, used this topic as an illustration of the fact that the Secretariat was already preparing a directory to deal with particular norms. One of the questions to be treated there would be "which place the reconciliation of individuals desiring to enter into the Catholic Church and their preparation can claim for itself in the pastoral work of the Church. It should also be clear that no opposition needs to exist between this form of apostolate and the action which is properly called ecumenical".[45]

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43 Mauro Velati, "Le Secrétariat pour l'Unité des Chrétiens et l'origine du décret sur l'oecuménisme (1962–1963)", M. Lamberigts et al. (eds.), *Les commissions conciliaires à Vatican II* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 181–204, 203.

44 "Schema Decreti de oecumenismo", *AS* II/2, 412–437.

45 *AS* II/2, 472–479, 477: "In eiusmodi Directorio generali vel particulari sermo erit etiam de quaestione, quemnam locum in opere pastorali Ecclesiae sibi vindicet reconciliatio individualis singulorum, qui in Ecclesiam catholicam ingredi desiderant, et praeparatio eorum. Patet enim nullam adesse debere oppositionem inter hanc speciem Apostolatus et actionem oecumenicam proprie dictam". In the 1967 *Directory on Ecumenism issued by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity*, however, this will not be a very prominent theme. The only relevant paragraph seems to be § 28: "In some places and with some communities, sects and persons, the ecumenical movement and the wish for peace with the Catholic Church have not yet grown strong (cf. Decree on Ecumenism, n. 19), and so this reciprocity and mutual understanding are more difficult; the local Ordinary or, if

The reading of the *relationes* was at the same time the start of the public debate on *De oecumenismo*. Because several Council Fathers asked to better define the difference between the work of ecumenism and the apostolate of conversions, this could no longer be ignored while preparing the third draft of *De oecumenismo*. In what follows, I will mention a few of them.[46] The new Archbishop of Westminster, John Carmel Heenan (1905–1975), addressed the Council Fathers on November 19, 1963 in the name of all the bishops of England and Wales. He was aware that some people believed "Catholics in England to be indifferent to the ecumenical movement". He admitted that Catholics in his country were waiting for an official standpoint from Rome before being willing to engage in ecumenical action, but now he could promise the separated brethren in his country that the dialogue with them would be promoted in the future. In the opinion of Heenan and his fellow bishops, the precise nature and goal of ecumenical action was not yet sufficiently clear. He made a proposal that, at the same time, contained a clear delineation of ecumenical action and individual conversion: "Ecumenical dialogue is not oriented towards individual souls … but takes place especially among communities".[47]

In his intervention on November 25, 1963, Anicetus Fernandez (1895–1981), the Master General of the Dominican order, expressed the hope that the next draft would be better able to counter an opinion sometimes heard among the Catholic faithful, that "ecumenism does injustice to the work of conversions and to the vigour of the preaching of the Gospel". It is therefore important to underline, in his opinion, that each of the four forms of the one ministry of the

need be, the episcopal conference may indicate suitable measures for preventing the dangers of indifferentism and proselytism among their faithful in these circumstances. It is to be hoped, however, that through the grace of the Holy Spirit and the prudent pastoral care of the bishops, ecumenical feeling and mutual regard will so increase both among Catholics and among their separated brethren that the need for these special measures will gradually vanish". Cf. "A Directory for the Application of the Second Vatican Council's Decisions on Ecumenism", *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 59 (1967), 574–592.

46 I selected them among the seven references mentioned in the *Relatio* justifying the addition of a few extra lines on this theme during the next session. Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio. Decretum de oecumenismo. Concilii Vaticani II Synopsis in ordinem redigens schemata cum relationibus necnon Patrum orationes atque animadversiones*, ed. Franciso Gil Hellín (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005), 58.

47 *AS* II/5, 366–368. The same point is also made in the intervention by Archbishop Maurice Roy of Québec, which he had submitted in written form. Cf. *AS* II/6, 293: "[F]ere nihil dicitur de puncto quodam magni momenti seu de principio adaequatio actionis in hoc campo, quod est: exercitium oecumenismi non fieri tantummodo inter individuas personas vel inter Ecclesiam catholicam et fratres nostros seiunctos separatim sumptos, sed principaliter inter Ecclesiam nostram et alias Ecclesias seu communitates".

Word of God are indispensable: the work of conversions, Catholic ecumenism, missionary work, and the re-evangelization of the Catholic faithful.[48] Even if the observers from other Christian churches and communities, generally speaking, had a significant influence both on the event and the documents of the Second Vatican Council,[49] their pleas not to proceed with the plan to add a few lines on the apostolate of conversions, however, were apparently ignored. During the weekly meetings between the observers and members of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, the observers had the opportunity to make comments on the documents that were currently being discussed *in aula*. At the meeting of November 19, the Anglican Canon Bernard Pawley expressed his concern about the new theme introduced by Archbishop Joseph Martin in his *Relatio*. Even if the Archbishop had only spoken about the instructions to be contained in the ecumenical directory, this was already a reason for serious concern for Canon Pawley: "In England at least the inclusion of such instructions at this point would undermine people's confidence in Roman Catholic intentions".[50]

48 *AS* II/6, 26.

49 Cf. P. De Mey, "As Separated but Closely Related Brethren (*fratres seiuncti*). The Harmonious Collaboration of Council and Observers on the Decree on Ecumenism 50 years ago", Christine Büchner et al. (Hrsg.), *Kommunikation ist möglich. Theologische, ökumenische und interreligiöse Lernprozesse. FS Bernd Jochen Hilberath* (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag), 78–97.

50 "Réunion des observateurs, 19 novembre 1963. Discussion sur le schéma De Oecumenismo" (F. Moeller, 1944), 14. For L. Vischer, "Von der zweiten zur dritten Session: Vorschau auf die dritte Session des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils," *Kirche in der Zeit*, September 1964 (F. Moeller, 2059), 6, this is equally a reason of serious concern: "Zahlreiche Bischöfe haben verlangt, daβ die Notwendigkeit und die Berechtigung organisierter Konversionsarbeit im Dekret unterstrichen würden. Es ist zu hoffen, daβ diese Stimmen sich nicht durchzusetzen vermögen". An anonymous three page "Bemerkung zum Schema *De Oecumenismo*, Kapitel I, § 4, 9, l. 11–16" (F. Moeller, 2056) treats the same topic: "Die Vermutung kann aufkommen, dass die ökumenische Arbeit einfach eine wirksamere Methode sei, um die nicht-römischen Gemeinschaften als Gesamte zu erfassen, dass aber der Apostolat der Versöhnung in seiner bisherigen Gestalt weiterhin für den 'oekumenischen' Umgang mit Einzelnen gelte. Das Misstrauen ist an dieser Stelle so gross, dass alles getan werden muss um derartige Missverständnisse zu vermeiden". I want to add, here, the reflection on conversions from a famous Protestant theologian who has not been an observer *stricto sensu*. Karl Barth (1886–1968) had been invited to attend the last two sessions of the Council but had to decline because of his poor health. In September 1966, however, the 80 year old Barth made a pilgrimage *Ad limina apostolorum* and was even received by Pope Paul VI. His own image of the Catholic Church had so much changed that he believed it was no longer necessary to promote individual conversions in between both churches: "'Conversions' from us to the Roman Catholic Church or from there to one

On November 20, a meeting of the sub-commission *De quaestionibus theologicis et de citationibus biblicis* was scheduled which made an attempt to provide a clear definition of both the apostolate of conversions and 'Catholic ecumenism'; however, the report contains the warning that this is only to be considered as provisional work.[51] The sub-commission then decided to start from the definition that the Archbishop of Westminster had proposed. According to Archbishop Martin the distinguishing element of ecumenism was "that it is addressed to the communities as such". Bishop Emiel-Jozef De Smedt of Bruges, however, did not entirely agree, since it is possible that two individual persons can engage in ecumenical dialogue apart from any reference to their communities. For him, the distinguishing element is to be found "in the nature of the act. In the apostolate of conversions one tries to convince, whereas in ecumenism, in the context of a dialogue, one gives a testimony of one's own faith".[52]

At the end of the second session, the staff members of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity re-read all oral and written interventions of the Council Fathers and copied them into new documents pertaining to the decree and its chapters 'in general' and to the individual paragraphs.[53] On the basis of this preparatory work, changes were proposed to the previous draft in response to interventions by particular bishops. On February 11, 1964, the decision was made "to mention the work of conversions" and the following text was proposed:

> It is, therefore, clear that no opposition exists between this ecumenical work and the apostolate of reconciliation of individuals and the prepara-

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of our churches have as such no significance (*peccatur intra muros et extra!*). They have significance only if they are in the form of a conscientiously necessary 'conversion' – not to another church, but to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Basically both here and there it can only be a matter of reach one heeding in his place in his own church the call to faith in the one Lord, and to his service". K. Barth, *Ad limina apostolorum: An Appraisal of Vatican II*, Richmond, VA, John Knox, 1968, 17–18. Cf. G. Routhier, "L'ombre de Karl Barth à Vatican II", ed. G. Bedouelle, M. Delgado (eds.), *La réception du Concile Vatican II par les théologiens suisses* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2011), 25–50.

51 "Sub-commissio Ia. *De quaestionibus theologicis et de citationibus biblicis*, le 20.XI.1963" (F. Stransky, box 8), 2.

52 Ibid.

53 This corpus of 668 pages comprises numbers 894 to 925 in F. DeSmedt.

> tion of those desiring to enter into the Catholic Church, since in both cases it pertains to a work inspired by the Holy Spirit.[54]

During the plenary meeting of the Secretariat for Christian Unity on February 28, it was decided, however, to add a concessionary clause to the statement, found in the main clause, that there is no opposition between both activities, admitting that "they should be distinguished by their nature".[55] The *Relatio* giving the reasons for the insertion of this new passage starts with a warning in response to the content of some interventions by Council Fathers the year before: "It should be noticed that ecumenism is understood entirely wrongly, if it is considered as a new tactic to more easily obtain conversions". Therefore, the new lines were added to the schema of *De oecumenismo*:

> … because the apostolate of the reconciliation of individual believers has equally to be recognized as a work of the Holy Spirit and is in no way opposed to the ecumenical work. This apostolate, however, is essentially

54 "*De oecumenismo*. Chapitre I, n° 3. *Mention de l'œuvre des conversions*, 11.2.1964" (F. Stransky, box 8). A line added by Stransky in pencil is very instructive. He mentions that the drafters were "Hamer, Feiner, Moeller, using terminology found in bishop Martin's *Relatio ad Patres Concilii*". During the discussion, apparently, it was decided to remove the redundant word 'individualis,' also found in Martin's *relatio* and also to first make mention of ecumenism. A comparison with the *relatio* (see n.46) makes it clear that actually only the line about the inspiration by the Holy Spirit of both forms of apostolate is new: 'Patet igitur nullam adesse oppositionem inter hanc actionem oecumenicam et apostolatum reconciliationis singulorum praeparationemque eorum qui in Ecclesiam catholicam ingredi desiderant, cum utrumque sit opus a Spiritu Santo inspiratum'. These lines have been inserted in the working draft of the Secretariat. Cf. "*De oecumenismo* 11.2.1964" (F. De Smedt, 1095), 10, and were motivated by father John Long S.J. in his "Relatio supra emendationes a Patribus Conciliaribus de Capite I° *De oecumenismo* proposita" (F. De Smedt, 998), 15: "Quia in mentibus tum aliquorum Patrum tum fidelium quaedam confusio existere videtur inter motum oecumenicum et apostolatum reconciliationis singulorum (i.e. conversionis individualis) bonum visum est commissioni novum incisum componere in quo monstretur nullam esse inter eas oppositionem, etiamsi inter se distingui debent tum propter methodum tum propter finem unicuique proprium".

55 "*De oecumenismo*, 28.2.1964" (F. Stransky, box 8), 7: "Patet igitur nullam adesse oppositionem, quamvis natura sua distinguantur …" This version was included in the final draft sent to the Council Fathers, cf. AS III/2, 296–329, 300. The careful study of the application of the hermeneutical tool of juxtaposition in the documents of Vatican II has been one of the hallmarks of the research of my esteemed colleague Henk Witte. See: *a.o.* Witte, "Reform with the Help of Juxtapositions. A Challenge to the Interpretation of the Documents of Vatican II", *The Jurist* 71 (2011), 20–34.

distinguished from the ecumenical movement, which has another goal and is of a different nature.[56]

The Substantial Impact of the Modi *Submitted during the Third Period*

During the third period of the Council, the Council Fathers still had the occasion to propose modifications to the new schema. Because this draft had been approved with a two-thirds majority, however, of the almost two thousand *modi* presented, the only ones accepted were those that attempted to help overcome potential misunderstandings of the decree, and which remained faithful to the intention of the previous schema. One of the twenty-nine approved *modi* pertains to our passage. All these *modi*, including those rejected, received a brief response by members of the Secretariat.[57]

In two of the eleven *modi*[58] dealing with our passage, the Council Fathers who were either strongly opposed to ecumenism or to the work of conversions requested the removal of the entire passage. Even if the decree states that there is no opposition between both activities, for Bishop Angelo Barbisotti (1904–1972), from the Ecuadorian diocese of Esmeraldas, the opposite seems to be the case: "As of the day when they began to speak about ecumenism, the number of Protestant conversions strongly diminished and, on the contrary, Protestant propaganda among the Catholic faithful, especially in Latin America, became stronger". Five Council Fathers – among whom four missionary bishops were of French origin – equally were in favour of an omission or a radical reformulation of the entire passage, because "individual conversions are not the object of the decree". Continuing, they stated that it is "superfluous to mention this theme here, because the legitimacy of conversions appears from the declaration *De libertate religiosa*". Conversely, these fathers expected "an explicit contempt for proselytism" in the text.

An anonymous request signed by 96 Council Fathers expressed the hope that the passage would be concluded with a reference to the missionary commandment in Mk 16:15. According to them, "passivity in the apostolate towards other Christians leads to the diminishing of conversions to the Catholic Church". The reaction from the Secretariat was rather harsh:

56 *Unitatis Redintegratio. Decretum de oecumenismo. Concilii Vaticani II Synopsis*, 58.

57 Cf. the remarks about *Textgeschichte* in B.J. Hilberath, *Theologischer Kommentar zum Dekret über den Ökumenismus Unitatis redintegratio* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil, 3), Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2005, 102.

58 All quotations from relevant *modi* are borrowed from *AS* III/7, 42–45, or from the original submissions found in "Modi Caput primum § 4" (F. De Smedt, 1276).

> Using these words in our text would mean identifying baptized Christians with pagans, which would be false and disastrous. The diffusion of the Gospel among non-Christians according to the commandment of the Lord is precisely greatly helped when we converse with other Christians in the way, described in this Decree.

The request by the Bishop of Mainz and consultor of the Secretariat, Hermann Volk (1903–1988) and by the Bishop of Chur, Johannes Vonderach (1916–1994) to speak about the 'work' rather than the 'apostolate' of conversions, as well as to transfer the statement about the distinction between the two activities from the concessive clause to the main clause was also attended to, albeit not their proposed text revision.

The most successful *modus*, however, was submitted by the Archbishop of Elisabethville, Joseph-Floribert Cornelis (1910–2001), a monk from the Benedictine abbey of Saint Andrew, Zevenkerken.[59] The Secretariat was directly involved in the drafting of the modus. Several draft versions are found in the archive of another monk from the same abbey, Jacques Dupont (1915-1998), who was never appointed a peritus at the Council but still engaged in conciliar work (F. Dupont, 830). As co-drafter the name of Emmanuel Lanne (1923-2010) is mentioned. Lanne was a monk of the Benedictine abbey of Chevetogne and member of the Secretariat since January 1963. The Secretariat decided to approve his new draft since "the meaning intended by the decree is better expressed by this new formulation". The reasons are clearly outlined in the citation below:

> It is, however, clear that the work of the reconciliation and preparation of those individuals who desire the full Catholic communion, is distinguished by its nature from the ecumenical enterprise; nevertheless there is no opposition, since both of them proceed from the action of the Holy Spirit.[60]
>
> Reasons: a) The word 'apostolate' has to be reserved for the evangelization of non-Christians; if it is applied to Christians it smacks of

59 Cf. E. Louchez, "Evêques missionnaires belges au Concile Vatican II: Typologie et stratégie", *The Belgian Contribution to the Second Vatican Council* (n. 15), 647–684.

60 There is a slight difference between the version of the modus – "Patet autem opus *reconciliationis ac praeparationis* eorum singulorum, qui plenam communionem catholicam desiderant, ab oecumenico incepto natura sua distingui; nulla tamen adest oppositio, cum utrumque ex actione Spiritus Sancti procedat". (*AS* III/7, 43) and the 'Emendationes admissae secundum modos a patribus introductos:' "Patet autem opus *praeparationis ac reconciliationis* eorum singulorum qui plenam communionem catholicam desiderant, ab oecumenico incepto natura sua distingui; nulla tamen adest oppositio, cum utrumque ex actione Spiritus Sancti procedat" (*AS* III/7, 48).

> 'proselytism', especially in the ears of non-Catholics. b) One should speak first of the work of conversion, so that the ecumenical action of Catholics does not seem to have the work of conversions as its goal. c) Because non-Catholic Christians are not simply outside the Church, they cannot properly be said "to enter into the Catholic Church".[61] d) the word 'inspired' (*inspiratum*) is not an accurate expression here. e) It should be logical first to speak about the distinction of each work and thereafter about its non-distinction. f) One should say 'however' (*autem*) instead of 'therefore' (*igitur*) because of the preceding context and 'undertaking' (*incepto*) instead of 'action' (*actionem*), so that 'action' is reserved for the Holy Spirit.

Why is it no longer stated in the final version of the decree that both ecumenism and conversion "proceed from the action of the Holy Spirit" (*ex actione Spiritus Sancti procedat*) but that they "proceed from the marvellous disposition of God" (*ex Dei mirabili dispositione procedat*)?[62] This is the result of one of the well-known changes that Pope Paul VI himself had proposed after the Secretariat had studied the *modi* submitted by the Council Fathers. One week before the Decree on Ecumenism would be promulgated on November 21, 1964, the Pope had asked to see the list of approved modifications. Relying on a list of modifications prepared by his personal theologian, the Italian Dominican Mario Ciappi (1909–1996), who, theologically-speaking, belonged to the conciliar minority, the Pope indicated in a confidential list which modifications he supported and which not. The protagonists of the Secretariat were aware of the huge difficulty: if the desire of the Pope was not met, the decree would not be promulgated; if the list of the Pope were followed entirely at the moment of the final vote, many Council Fathers would perhaps express their frustration about this blatant non-recognition of their work with a negative vote.[63] The

61 A similar request is found in another modus, submitted by Bishop Garabed Amadouni (1900–1984), Apostolic Exarch for the Armenians in France: "Propter rationes oecumenicas evitandus est conceptus 'ingressus', qui 'egressum' supponit".

62 *AS* III/8, 845–859, 849.

63 I am indebted to Velati, "L'ecumenismo al concilio: Paolo VI e l'approvazione di Unitatis redintegratio", *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 27 (2005), 427–476, partim. He mentions that Willebrands at first had objected to this particular change, originating in the personal irritation of Ciappi against relating the ecumenical movement and the Holy Spirit, but that he eventually accepted the *modus* (ibid., 447). One wonders whether there is a link between the request of the Pope to remove the reference to the Spirit in this passage and the acceptance of a *modus* submitted by 18 Council fathers during the discussion on *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* in October 1964, asking that one should recognize "the influence of

consultor of the Secretariat, Johannes Feiner, considers this particular alteration, like most others, to be mainly stylistic in nature:

> The statement in the altered text that both the acceptance of individual non-Catholic Christians into the Catholic Church, and also ecumenical work, proceed from God's providence, instead of from the action of the Holy Spirit, as in the earlier text, presents a different point of view, without contesting the previous point of view. The preface has already derived the ecumenical movement from the work of the Holy Spirit.[64]

3 Postlude: Postconciliar Tensions between Ecumenism and Conversion in the Magisterium

The internal discussions on the precise relationship between 'Catholic ecumenism' and 'the work of conversions' within the Secretariat for Christian Unity, as of 1961, clearly revealed the existence of a tension between advocates of a more ecumenical approach and defenders of the apostolate of conversion. The majority opinion within the Secretariat clearly was in favour of ecumenism; as can be derived from the fact that neither the draft prepared prior to the Council nor the revised *De oecumenismo* from 1963 are interested in the theme of conversions. The addition of a few lines on the relationship between ecumenism and conversion to the 1964 draft of *De oecumenismo* was the result of

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the grace of the Holy Spirit" when an Orthodox is received into the Catholic Church. OE 25 now reads: "Nothing more than what a simple profession of the catholic faith requires should be asked of people of separated eastern churches coming into the unity of the catholic church under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit". The Benedictine abbot Johannes Maria Hoeck, an influential member of the Oriental Commission, was rather critical about this paragraph, belonging to a section dealing with 'Relations with the brethren of the separated churches': "That individual conversions should be spoken of here of all places, and this too at the beginning, cannot be regarded as fortunate". Cf. J.M. Hoeck, "Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches", H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (London: Burns & Oates, vol. 2, 1968), 1–56.

64 J. Feiner, "Commentary on the Decree on Ecumenism", H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, 57–164, 162. The reference to "the marvellous disposition of God" (*ex Dei mirabili dispositione procedat*) has some affinity with a line in the *modus* proposed by the archbishop of Aix-en-Provence Charles de Provenchères (1904–1984), who was of the opinion that "the work of reconciliation is almost excused" in the original passage. He believed that it was important "to say clearly that this work was a great gift of God" (*clare debet dici hoc esse magnum donum Dei*).

many pressing interventions by the Council Fathers, even if the *modi* continue to reflect the divergence of opinions on this topic.

The disadvantage of the compromise reached in the final version of UR 4 is that it can be explained in two different ways: those strongly defending the way of ecumenism may point to the fact that the priority of the decree is clear, since only 30 out of 5.000 words deal with the work toward conversions; critics of ecumenism may argue that the many interventions of the Council Fathers in favour of the apostolate of conversions in the end resulted happily in the recognition of the equal importance of and essential distinction between both pastoral approaches.

The encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995) by Pope John Paul II seems to pursue the line of the Secretariat for Christian Unity and is most interested in the "clear connection between renewal, conversion and reform" (art. 16) which the Decree on Ecumenism defends in the second chapter.[65] The novelty of *Ut unum sint* is that it explicitly implies the inclusion of the Petrine office in its reflection on conversion (art. 4), culminating in an invitation to the leaders of the other Christian churches and their theologians (art. 96) to help the Pope "to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation" (art. 95).[66]

65 Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism*, at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html> (Accessed 19 December 2015). Even the following line is inspired by UR 6 and not by the reference to the work of conversions in UR 4: "Only the act of placing ourselves before God can offer a solid basis for that conversion of individual Christians and for that constant reform of the church, insofar as she is also a human and earthly institution, which represent the preconditions for all ecumenical commitment" (§ 82).

66 In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013) Pope Francis acknowledged: "We have made little progress in this regard. The papacy and the central structures of the universal Church also need to hear the call to pastoral conversion". (§ 32) The acclaimed ghost-writer of *Ut unum sint*, Jean-Marie Tillard O.P. (1927–2000), had made the necessary path of conversion also very much concrete in a chapter written one year after the papal encyclical on ecumenism: "Les grandes orientations ecclésiastiques de *Lumen gentium* ne s'incarnent que lentement dans les mœurs. C'est ce qu'il advient de tout concile. (…) Pour sa propre paix intérieure mais aussi pour la poursuite de son entreprise œcuménique, si bien lancée, il importe maintenant que sereinement, dans la confiance, on prolonge la vue de Vatican II sur l'interdépendance entre la sedes romaine et les autres sedes" (J.-M.R. Tillard, "Conversion, oecuménisme," A. Melloni (ed.), *Cristianesimo nella Storia: saggi in onore di Giuseppe Alberigo*, [Bologna: Mulino, 1996], 517–536, 530).

The apostolic constitution *Anglicanorum coetibus* (2009) by Pope Benedict XVI,[67] which argued for creating canonical structures to allow "groups of Anglicans to be received into full Catholic communion individually as well as corporately", is a perfect illustration of the clear distinction which UR 4 has installed between ecumenical action and the work of conversions.[68] Yet, whereas the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has always supported the dialogue between communions on the way towards full visible unity, now the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith takes the lead in promoting ecumenism in its own way, taking a literal interpretation of the goal of 'Catholic unity' (LG 8) as its motto and imposing the Catechism of the Catholic Church as "the authoritative expression of the Catholic faith". Defenders of this initiative praise its ecumenical orientation, insisting especially on the willingness of the document "to maintain the liturgical, spiritual and pastoral traditions of the Anglican Communion within the Catholic Church".[69] Most Catholic ecumenists, however, are of a different opinion as they wonder how the proposed structure of the personal ordinariate can be reconciled with the indispensable place of the bishop in Anglican ecclesiology.[70] The executive body of the

67 All references are taken from Pope Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus providing for Personal Ordinariates for Anglicans Entering into Full Communion with the Catholic Church*, at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apc_20091104_anglicanorum-coetibus.html (Accessed 19 December 2015).

68 Cf. E. Kuehn, "The Anglican Covenant and Anglicanorum Coetibus", B. Guyer (ed.), *Pro Communione: Theological Essays on the Anglican Covenant* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 166–181, 171: "The decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* states, 'However, it is evident that, when individuals wish for full Catholic communion, their preparation and reconciliation is an undertaking which of its nature is distinct from ecumenical action', so that even by Roman Catholic standards *Anglicanorum Coetibus* is distinct from any ecumenical endeavour".

69 This is the case for most contributions to: M. Woodruff (ed.), *Anglicans and Catholics in Communion*: *Patrimony, Unity and Mission* (The Messenger of the Catholic League, 292) (Norfolk: Postprint, 2010).

70 Cf. H. Legrand, "Épiscopat, episcope, Église locale et communion des Églises dans la constitution apostolique *Anglicanorum coetibus*", *Cristianisimo nella storia* 32 (2011), 405–423, 416: "Même si l'on estime très positives ses intentions de conserver le patrimoine Anglican, l'ordinariat ne peut être considéré comme un modèle œcuménique car, en sa structure même, il n'est pas homogène à l'ecclésiologie anglicane, comme le montre une simple référence au Quadrilatère de Lambeth". See also : M. Van Parys, "La Constitution apostolique Anglicanorum Coetibus: l'évaluation d'un œcuméniste catholique", *Cristianisimo nella storia* 32 (2011), 479–487, 484: "A nos yeux il s'agirait de rien de moins qu'une régression de l'œcuménisme à l'"unionisme"". Also: G. Mannion, "A (Strange) Sort of

Catholic League welcomed *Anglicanorum coetibus* with a Scriptural quotation: "It is accomplished" (John 19:30).[71] Catholic ecumenists like Henk Witte are unable to repeat these words but continue to believe and remain engaged in germane ecumenical action.

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CHAPTER 15

Conversion: Key Concept or Hot Potato in Contemporary Ecumenism?

Annemarie C. Mayer

Today it would seem that converting from one Christian church to another is no longer as contentious and critical an issue as in former centuries.[1] Back then, depending on who the person was who converted, this could have a huge impact on both internal and external affairs and even on the existence of whole nations.[2] In times of increasing religious freedom, conversion has become an individual affair, at least in the western world. But particular problems arise when the person converting has previously been committed to ecumenism.

1 'Conversion' – A Mixed Blessing in Ecumenism?

In recent decades quite a few theologians involved in ecumenical studies and dialogue have converted.[3] As Michael Root, formerly Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC, now Professor of Systematic Theology at the Catholic University of America and at the time of his conversion in 2010 a Lutheran member of the International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue remarked:

1 In order to keep things simple, the 'politically correct' Roman Catholic way of speaking of 'churches and ecclesial communities' will, where theologically possible, be substituted by the sociological descriptive use of the terms 'church' or 'denomination'.

2 Some prominent examples are King Clovis I, Frederick the Wise, and Henry VIII. Emperor Constantine, who is often mentioned as an example, does not quite fit the list, since he converted from being a non-Christian to Christianity.

3 E.g. (in chronological order of conversions) the renowned expert in Eastern Orthodox studies, Bishop Kallistos Ware (*1934), raised Anglican, became Greek Orthodox in 1958; Richard John Neuhaus (*1936), the founder of *First Things* and author of *The Naked Public Square*, became Roman Catholic in 1990; Jaroslav Pelikan (*1923), a preeminent church historian and professor at Yale, decided together with his wife to convert, or rather as he put it 'return', to Orthodoxy in 1998; Ola Tjørhom (*1953), professor of the Norwegian School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, a previous staff member of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, became Roman Catholic in 2003; Karl Christian Felmy (*1938), who had been professor of theology at Heidelberg, became Russian Orthodox in 2007.

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> [a] risk of ecumenical study is that one will come to find another tradition compelling in a way that leads to a deep change in mind and heart. Over the last year or so, it has become clear to me, not without struggle, that I have become a Catholic in my mind and heart in ways that no longer permit me to present myself as a Lutheran theologian with honesty and integrity. This move is less a matter of decision than of discernment.[4]

Such instances of individual conversion generally pose a challenge to the atmosphere in an official ecumenical dialogue. It is not generally welcomed by either group whenever, in a bilateral dialogue, a member of one denomination converts and becomes a member of the other denomination. It tastes like proselytism and is generally felt not to be a form of Christian witness but rather the corruption of it. At best, the specific witness of the convert to the theological position of his or her church is called into question, and this not only by dialogue partners, but also by the church authorities who delegated this person who subsequently converted. Such individual conversions create a dilemma for official ecumenical dialogues: On the one hand, the relation between ecumenism and membership of a particular Christian denomination[5] cannot just be regarded as a relic of pre-ecumenical days. On the other hand, it has to be acknowledged that the conversion from one denomination to another, at least in most cases, involves a more intense search for religious truth.[6] Perhaps Jaroslav Pelikan, decades before his own conversion to Orthodoxy, gave the best formulation of why individual conversions cause unease among ecumenists: "Conversion is an individualistic solution to a church problem [...] The

4 M. Root, *Statement to the Lutheran Theological Seminary Faculty* (2010): <https://scecclesia.wordpress.com/2010/08/20/news-just-in-michael-root-becomes-catholic/> (Accessed 10 July 2015).

5 As Roman Catholic members of an international dialogue commission, it is required that they are delegated by the Vatican, more precisely they are approved by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Secretariat of State at the request of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU); cf. also PCPCU, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (1993) no. 174: "The participants in certain dialogues are appointed by the hierarchy to take part not in a personal capacity, but as delegated representatives of their Church. Such mandates can be given by the local Ordinary, the Synod of Eastern Catholic Churches or the Episcopal Conference within its territory, or by the Holy See. In these cases, the Catholic participants have a special responsibility towards the authority that has sent them": <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_25031993_principles-and-norms-on-ecumenism_en.html> (Accessed 10 July 2015).

6 Cf. C.J. Peter, "Ecumenism and Denominational Conversion: Reflections of a Roman Catholic", *Communio* (1976), 188–199.

individual who rashly seeks to hasten its solution by a precipitate action of his own may well be postponing the eventual solution. The road to solution [...] is through mutual understanding, study and witness".[7]

Yet how can such a church problem be grasped and how can it be addressed by conversion? First of all, conversion has a lot to do with ecumenism, if ecumenism is really to be lived and not just theoretically reflected on. And this also involves – at least to a certain extent – individual conversion. "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart. For it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds, from self-denial and an unstinted love that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way" (UR 7).[8] Thus already the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, assessed the mutual ecumenical efforts between different churches and ecclesial communities, even without decades of practical experience in bilateral dialogues. Some paragraphs earlier in the same document had stated, "it is evident that, when individuals wish for full Catholic communion, their preparation and reconciliation is an undertaking which of its nature is distinct from ecumenical action. But there is no opposition between the two, since both proceed from the marvellous ways of God" (UR 4).

In fact, seen in this light, conversion seems to be a prerequisite for true ecumenism, while, at the same time, it can also aggravate ecumenical relations. Is 'conversion' thus an equivocal term? Does changing one's denomination have nothing whatsoever to do with the attitude needed to allow for changes required for ecumenical rapprochement and *vice versa*? Or is it already enough to state, as *Unitatis redintegratio* 4 does, that "both proceed from the marvellous ways of God" but are distinct? What are the key features that characterize conversion understood as one of the principles of ecumenism?

The following reflections identify conversion as a fundamental Christian attitude that is an indispensable trait of true ecumenism. Tracing the observations of the Groupe des Dombes, an independent dialogue group of French-speaking Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed theologians, founded in 1931, four key features of conversion as an ecumenical principle are identified. At the beginning of the ecumenical movement, the different Christian denominations realized that competing with each other and trying to poach converts from each other would compromise the Christian witness. How are the mechanisms that were developed in the course of the last century in order to get

7 J. Pelikan, *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), 199–200.

8 For the sake of easy verification all texts from Vatican II are quoted according to the English online translation on the Vatican website: <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents> (Accessed 10 July 2015).

beyond a mere 'doctrine divides, service unites' attitude, functioning today? Have they been superseded, made redundant or missed their point altogether? We will take a closer look at two documents, the encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995) and *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World* (2011), in an attempt to answer these questions. Given the close connection between conversion and (self-) renewal, a concrete example is analysed more closely. What can this analysis tell us about the future tasks of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to its ecumenical relations? These reflections are undertaken from a Roman Catholic perspective and the awareness that in ecumenism there can be no Archimedean point from where we can survey the whole ecumenical landscape objectively and with a view of its totality. Although, like any academic discipline, theology should strive for a general intelligibility of its subject matter, it is a sobering thought that even the greatest objectivity is still very much just one of many possible perspectives. Henk Witte, to whom this volume is dedicated, has always been highly conscious of this. To him, a theology that is based on the concrete experience of the self-revelation of God in history actually requires some degree of personal commitment.

2 Some Key Features of 'Conversion' as an Ecumenical Principle

The Biblical Greek term μετάνοια designates the change of one's inner attitude[9] that leads to ἐπιστροφή, the resulting shift of one's actions into a different direction.[10] Conversion comprises a revision of one's religious view not only

9 Cf. R. Schnackenburg, "Metanoia", *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 7 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1962), col. 356–359; 356: 'ist a) eine ganzheitliche Haltung des Menschen, die alle seine Kräfte beansprucht; b) ein religiöses Verhalten, eine entschiedene Ganzhinwendung zu Gott, meist eine Wiederhinwendung von verkehrten Wegen (Umkehr); c) nicht nur Abwendung von und Sühne für begangene Sünden (Reue u. Buße), sondern auch eine Neuorientierung für die Zukunft; d) nicht selten eine Glaubensbekehrung, wenigstens ein neues und vertieftes Verständnis von Gott und seinem heiligen Willen; e) Antwort auf den Gnadenruf Gottes, von Gott gewährte Heilsmöglichkeit'.

10 This is to be pointed out against P. Gerlitz, "Konversion I", *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Studienausgabe Teil II, vol XIX (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2000), 559–563, who separates the two and insists that *epistrophe* as an ontological process "bezeichnet seit Plotin die Hinwendung zu sich selbst und damit die Rückkehr zum Grund des Seins (*Enn.* V,1,1; 2,1; VI.7,16; 9;2). Die Bedeutung 'Sinnesänderung', 'Reue veranlassen' taucht bei Plutarch (*De Cat. Min.* 14) auf; jedoch bleibt *epistrophe* nach griech.-hellenist. Verständnis *terminus technicus* für einen ontologischen Prozeß, der z.B. durch die Erziehung bewirkt wird (Plato, *Res publ.* VII,518c-519b)".

with regard to the past but also to the future. It requires a new orientation that is generally seen as a response to a call coming from God. This is true for the Old and the New Testament.

More specifically, for Jesus himself, the act of μετάνοια is closely linked to his proclamation of the kingdom of God, as for instance in Mark 1:15: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; μετανοεῖτε, and believe in the good news". In an eschatological horizon, Jesus calls for immediate (cf. Mt 21:28–31), wholehearted (cf. Lk 13:1–5; 18:9–14) and unwavering (cf. Lk 11:24ff = Mt 12:43ff) μετάνοια. Being a Christian rests on this conversion that is required by the coming, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a conversion to God the Father in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. In both elements a renunciation of former attitudes and a new orientation are present. With regard to this temporal component, a time before and after the conversion can be identified. Conversely, Christian existence as a whole is marked by a conversion to God that is an ongoing process, a process of *Christiformitas*, becoming like Christ by following Christ. This basic conversion is called 'Christian conversion' by the Groupe des Dombes in its 1991 ground-breaking study, *For the Conversion of the Churches* (FCC).[11] Such a conversion's absolute nature opens onto a process:

> that is never accomplished fully in this world. This conversion to faith is initiated and celebrated in baptism. Thus it concludes an 'already there' but also a 'not yet'. It is a grace that opens onto a task. It leads into an existence that must undergo a continual conversion. That conversion is a struggle conducted in grace against all forms of sin, personal and collective (FCC 39).

These considerations reveal two important features of conversion as an ecumenical principle: As a phenomenon, conversion is *not confined to the ecumenical realm*. Instead, it is a general attitude of Christian life. And its *temporal* yet at the same time processual *character* is essential. Conversion is not brought about once and for all at one specific point in time. It is an on-going process, even in ecumenical contexts, while there can or, rather, should be, an identifiable moment or act when the process of conversion is initiated. Beyond this basic existence in conversion that characterizes any Christian identity, the Groupe des Dombes further identifies ecclesial and confessional conversion, whereby "ecclesial conversion is the constant effort of the church community

11 Groupe des Dombes, "For the Conversion of the Churches (1991)", C.E. Clifford (ed.), *For the Communion of the Churches: The Contributions of the Groupe des Dombes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 149–223.

as such to strive towards its Christian identity" (FCC 41). And in the specifically ecumenical context of ongoing division, they state the following:

> Confessional conversion is first of all conversion to the God of Jesus Christ and consequently a fraternal reconciliation among the churches as they seek full communion and full mutual ecclesial recognition – not to the detriment of confessional identity, but for purification and deepening in line with the gospel (FCC 51).

Church unity can come about only through a continuous process of conversion that leads to increasing convergence. Continuing, "conversion is not simply at the source of the ecumenical movement. It represents its constantly underlying motivation. When conversion flags, the ecumenical movement stagnates or even goes into reverse. All the Christian confessions and all the Christians in each of them have to keep moving forward in the attitude of conversion" (FCC 134).

The convergence resulting from the process of conversion is itself a process of ecumenical rapprochement: if churches come closer to God in Jesus Christ through the Spirit, it can only mean they are coming closer to each other. The "need for the Christian churches […] to walk the way of conversion towards more visible structural and sacramental unity"[12] is entailed by the logic of belief in Christ as such. Thus, the conversion required for church unity is not only that of individuals nor of the Church of Christ as a whole, but is also a 'confessional conversion'. Could the mutual recognition that the different churches and ecclesial communities are in a process of conversion leading to an increasing communion – although communion is still imperfect among those churches, each of them is in full communion with Christ – open up a way for a mutual recognition as churches? The various churches and ecclesial communities would be in a phase of companionship, together attaining an ever greater communion with Christ and thus with each other. This would be close to what Cardinal Kasper calls 'ecumenism of life': a common orientation towards Christ, comprising the whole life of the churches.[13]

Such a growing convergence through conversion also requires that conversion contains a *potential of renewal and reform*, since conversion is not just

12 P. Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 32.

13 W. Kasper, "Ökumene des Lebens". Paper given at the Katholikentag, Ulm 2004: <http://www.foerderverein-unita-dei-cristiani.com/seite/pdf/wk_oedl.pdf> (Accessed 20 July 2015).

a change of attitude towards others but also a renewal of one's own practices. The attitude of conversion already presupposes sinful traits of the Christian, ecclesial, and confessional existence. These traits are to be found in any denomination. They are already there *qua conditio humana* and they are ecumenically decisive. They require a change of the basic attitudes of self-segregation and separation. They require doctrinal openness and the insight that the whole truth might be more than the sum of its parts. On the other hand, the compatibility of ecumenical documents with the doctrine of the churches engaged in dialogue with each other ensures that they are mutually acceptable.

When differentiating the levels of conversion, the Groupe des Dombes links them to different corresponding forms of identity.[14] This shows that Christian, ecclesial and confessional identities are inseparable from, and indeed grounded in, conversion. Identity is always lived by conversion to God, in each case. Ultimately, there exists a kind of *dialectics between conversion and identity*. What gives a specific church its identity? The answer of the Groupe des Dombes is: a specific combination of Christian, ecclesial and confessional identity with corresponding forms of conversion. Ecumenically, however, the emphasis is on 'confessional identity', for 'confessional conversion' is the attitude required for any progress of the ecumenical movement. Realistically, however, the Groupe des Dombes points out:

> The forms of resistance to the ecumenical movement and to the confessional conversion it calls for, are many: a preference for the more comfortable status quo, a fear of losing one's confessional identity, and, above all, indifference on the part of the majority. Non-doctrinal factors are still important: the old clichés and fears continually reappear while the gap separating theologians undertaking research, church officials, and the majority of the Christian people becomes more pronounced. These attitudes often express a false idea both of unity and of truth, of identity and conversion (FCC 134).

The main problem seems to be the dialectics of confessional identity and conversion. The obstacle to confessional conversion is the fear that distinctive features of 'confessional identity' that are considered to be indispensable will be lost in the process of conversion. This fear triggers concepts such as 'ecu-

14 In *For the Conversion of the Churches* Christian identity is dealt with in nos. 15–21, ecclesial identity in nos. 22–25, and confessional identity in nos. 26–35.

menism of profiles'[15] or 'ecumenism of difference'. The idea behind these notions is that a sharper profile would facilitate honest confessional ecumenical progress. This certainly has something to commend it. Yet such concepts also reflect the fact that some churches tend to establish their own identity solely by defining themselves negatively, as being different from the others.[16] Churches that adopt concepts like these are no longer keen on ecumenical exchange and partnership. They no longer strive to 'act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately',[17] as set out by the *Lund Principle*.

Does this mean that Christian churches today would be better off without their confessional identities, which cause ecumenical resistance and pose a threat to the identities of other churches? The Groupe des Dombes points out that the distinction between ecclesial and confessional identity is not universally accepted, neither by the Orthodox Church nor by the Roman Catholic Church, since both never understood themselves theologically as confessions (cf. FCC 26). However, these two churches face the same obstacles and hindrances when dealing with their identities. Confessional identities must thus be converted to be faithful to themselves, so that the churches can experience their Christian identity in these confessions, and at the same time in dialogue with the other. Therefore the Groupe des Dombes reaches the conclusion:

> For our part [...] we see the ecumenical movement as a great process of conversion and reconciliation of our diversities in the quest for

15 Cf. e.g. W. Huber, "Was bedeutet Ökumene der Profile?", J. Brosseder, M. Wriedt (Hrsg.), *'Kein Anlass zur Verwerfung'. Studien zur Hermeneutik des ökumenischen Gesprächs*, Festschrift Otto Hermann Pesch (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 2007), 399–410; K. Lehmann, "Was bedeutet 'Ökumene der Profile'?", in: ibid., 411–421; U.H.J. Körtner, "Kirchliche Identitäten im Wandel: Differenzökumene und Ökumene der Profile", *Deutsches Pfarrerblatt* 107 (2007), 480–482; B. Oberdorfer, "Konsensökumene? Differenzökumene? Ökumene der Profile?: Ulrich Körtners Beitrag zur neueren Diskussion um Leitvorstellungen des ökumenischen Gesprächs", *Kerygma und Dogma* 55 (2009), 39–51.

16 E.g. 'We are Protestants because we are not Catholic, we don't have holy water, candles, the sign of the cross' etc., while it would be possible to define being Protestant also in a positive way, e.g. as being committed to the gospel. A recent church official example is the Archbishop of Canterbury's invitation to a Primates' meeting dating from 16 September 2015 where he states "We have no Anglican Pope" instead of describing the function of the Primates in the Anglican Communion more concisely: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5613/archbishop-of-canterbury-calls-for-primates-gathering> (Accessed 15 November 2015).

17 O.S. Tomkins (ed.), *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, Sweden, 1952* (London: SCM Press, 1953), 15–38; 16.

> communion among confessional identities that, once cleansed of their unevangelical or sinful elements, can receive each other, become complementary, and enrich each other. Difference is legitimate within *koinonia* (communion). Thus the churches are invited to arrive at a common recognition of what distinguishes legitimate differences from separative divergences. Confessional identities are not to be abandoned, but to be transformed. Such a vision aims at always linking the concern of unity with that of mission. It is received as faithfulness to the Spirit who leads us forward (FCC 153).

3 Beyond a 'Service Unites' Attitude

"Linking the concern of unity with that of mission" indeed serves as an ecumenical litmus test. A glance at church history reveals a quite competitive attitude among the respective churches. As Kurt Aland states in his study on the history of conversion, *Der Glaubenswechsel in der Geschichte*: "The strength of a church is mirrored in the conversions it attracts, as far as they are genuine".[18] Going back to the roots of the ecumenical movement shows that both concepts – that of individual and of confessional conversion – are not totally separated after all. The difficulties that prompted the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference were related to denominationalism and, ultimately, to the question of which denomination someone should choose if he or she wanted to convert and become a Christian. The motto 'doctrine divides, service unites', the watchword of the Life and Work Movement and one of the strands that led to the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948, represents a first step of some churches into the direction of common action when facing worldwide problems. But is this enough? What would be the elements of an ecumenically 'sustainable' conversion?

After three decades of official ecumenical involvement, the encyclical of John Paul II on commitment to ecumenism, *Ut unum sint* (UUS), reviews some

18 K. Aland, *Über den Glaubenswechsel in der Geschichte des Christentums* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1961), 126f.: "Die von einer Kirche entfaltete Kraft spiegelt sich in den Übertritten zu ihr wieder, soweit diese echt sind […] Verfügt diese Kirche zusätzlich über die Möglichkeiten zur Entfaltung unechter Kräfte (durch politisches Übergewicht, Angebot äußerer Vorteile und was dergleichen mehr ist bis hin zur Anwendung von Gewalt und zur Führung von Religionskriegen), wird die Zahl unechter Übertritte natürlich ebenfalls groß sein […] Sind die Kräfte [zwischen den Kirchen] gleich (wie im 19. Jahrhundert), kommt es zu Erfolgen auf beiden Seiten und zu miteinander rivalisierenden Einbrüchen auf denselben Sektoren".

elements of an ecumenically sustainable conversion from a Roman Catholic perspective: "An overall view of the last thirty years enables us better to appreciate many of the fruits of this common conversion to the Gospel which the Spirit of God has brought about by means of the ecumenical movement" (UUS 41).[19] This movement is classified as a process of conversion that has led from competition to not just common social action, but to common witness as well.[20] Following Vatican II, the pope points first to "the need for interior conversion" (UUS 15) along the lines of Jesus's call to repent. This need for personal, interior conversion indicates "the fundamental need for evangelization at every stage of the Church's journey of salvation" (UUS 15). Yet there is also a need for communal conversion, defined as the "desire of every Christian Community for unity" (UUS 15). Communal conversion is based on:

> The knowledge that the Spirit is at work in other Christian Communities, the discovery of examples of holiness, the experience of the immense riches present in the communion of saints, and contact with unexpected dimensions of Christian commitment. In a corresponding way, there is an increased sense of the need for repentance (UUS 15).

The driving force behind this sentiment is clearly a desire to ask for forgiveness for past failings.[21] "All the sins of the world were gathered up in the saving sacrifice of Christ, including the sins committed against the Church's unity: the sins of Christians, those of the pastors no less than those of the lay faithful" (UUS 34). In this context, even sinful structures are denounced. This calls for a "necessary purification of past memories. With the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's disciples, inspired by love, by the power of the truth and by a sincere desire for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, are called to re-examine together their painful past and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today" (UUS 2). In all these instances the retrospective ele-

19 John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint: On Commitment to Ecumenism* (1995): <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html> (Accessed 6 July 2015)

20 Especially, the studies of Faith and Order are mentioned as "useful tools for discerning what is necessary to the ecumenical movement and to the conversion which it must inspire" (UUS 17).

21 Cf. most prominently the confession of sins and asking for forgiveness in a mass of repentance celebrated by John Paul II on the first Sunday of Lent, 12 March 2000: <http://www.sacredheart.edu/faithservice/centerforchristianandjewishunderstanding/documentsandstatements/popejohnpauliiasksforforgivenessmarch122000/> (Accessed 20 July 2015)

ment dominates. Yet what about any present exclusions and shortcomings? The pope only speaks of the connection between renewal, conversion, and reform in UUS 16. It is labelled as part of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Frank and honest dialogue is supposed to lead to a kind of *correctio fraterna*. "The increase of fellowship in a reform which is continuous and carried out in the light of the Apostolic Tradition is certainly, in the present circumstances of Christians, one of the distinctive and most important aspects of ecumenism" (UUS 17). Spiritual ecumenism (UUS 21) is identified as a basis for reform and renewal which transforms ecumenical dialogue into a 'dialogue of conversion':

> Dialogue cannot take place merely on a horizontal level, being restricted to meetings, exchanges of points of view or even the sharing of gifts proper to each Community. It has also a primarily vertical thrust, directed towards the One who, as the Redeemer of the world and the Lord of history, is himself our Reconciliation. This vertical aspect of dialogue lies in our acknowledgment, jointly and to each other, that we are men and women who have sinned. It is precisely this acknowledgment which creates in brothers and sisters living in Communities not in full communion with one another that interior space where Christ, the source of the Church's unity, can effectively act, with all the power of his Spirit, the Paraclete (UUS 35).

The idea of a 'dialogue of conversion' is taken up again in UUS 82, first on an individual,[22] then on a communal level.[23] The encyclical concludes: "Only the act of placing ourselves before God can offer a solid basis for that conversion of individual Christians and for that constant reform of the Church, insofar as she is also a human and earthly institution, which represents the preconditions for all ecumenical commitment" (UUS 82).

With regard to the four key features of conversion, clearly the potential of renewal and reform, especially that of self-renewal, remains underdeveloped

22 "The Catholic Church must enter into what might be called a 'dialogue of conversion', which constitutes the spiritual foundation of ecumenical dialogue. In this dialogue, which takes place before God, *each individual* must recognize his own faults, confess his sins and place himself in the hands of the One who is our Intercessor before the Father, Jesus Christ" (UUS 82) [my italics].

23 "The 'dialogue of conversion' with the Father *on the part of each Community*, with the full acceptance of all that it demands, is the basis of fraternal relations which will be something more than a mere cordial understanding or external sociability. The bonds of fraternal koinonia must be forged before God and in Christ Jesus" (UUS 82) [my italics].

in *Ut unum sint*. The other features are taken up as positive aspects of conversion. Here, a spiritual aspect is highlighted for the first time as being in keeping with 'Christian conversion'. It is developed into a 'dialogue of conversion' in the context of spiritual ecumenism.

However, what is clearly not yet within the focus of *Ut unum sint* is the situation that is dealt with in the ecumenical text *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, which was jointly published in 2011 by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches, and, at the invitation of the latter, the World Evangelical Alliance.[24] In a worldwide multi-religious context, this text addresses the newly critical situation of the conversion of Christians by other Christians. It focuses on the practical consequences and is less concerned with the topical issue of double religious belonging[25] than with the blunt fact of 'sheep stealing' by other Christian communities. Although it had been hoped that, through the modern ecumenical movement, the competitiveness of former mission strategies had been superseded, this clearly was not the case. For indeed there has been a conflicting understanding of evangelism, conversion and proselytism that causes, once more, severe ecumenical problems similar to those at the beginning of the ecumenical movement. Some Christians think it is appropriate to also include the members of other churches in their evangelising efforts. They justify their attempts by pointing out that, despite being baptized, these Christians are only 'nominal' or 'lukewarm' and need to be re-evangelized and converted to the Saviour.

On a worldwide scale, this practice causes a lot of tensions. As the text argues, "Christians fighting among themselves to convert baptized Christians and others pose a serious missiological and ecumenical problem".[26] Such forms of proselytism hinder a common witness and enhance Christian disunity. "This situation requires the disciples of Jesus to seek mutual conversion before converting others".[27] Meanwhile, the current conversion debate resulted in a

24 World Council of Churches/ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue/World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World. Recommendations for Conduct* (2011): <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world> (Accessed 11 July 2015.

25 Cf. P. Fridlund, "Double Religious Belonging and Some Commonly Held Ideas about Dialogue and Conversion", *Mission Studies* 31 (2014), 255–279.

26 I. Kodithuwakku, "Conversion and Proselytism in the Light of "Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World", *International Review of Mission* 103 (2014), 109–115; 111.

27 Ibid.

whole chain of conflicts: It led to defaming and demonizing rival Christian groups at the cost of an ecumenical spirit. It caused inter-religious distrust and conflicts, since the established Christian churches sought to be left alone, while other religions and proselytizing Christian groups demanded the freedom to propagate their message. It sparked both a human rights debate and a legal battle – with local political leaders politicizing the conversion debate and human rights organizations, as well as some western governments intervening, in favour of religious freedom.

In this situation, *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World* seeks to overcome and minimize the controversies and tensions related to Christian mission and conversion by an ethical approach. In doing so, it lays out twelve principles for Christian witness in fulfilling Christ's commission in a multi-religious context.[28] As a practical guide, the text concludes with six recommendations: Christians are asked to *study the issues* mentioned in the document with an eye to formulating guidelines relevant to Christian witness, if possible ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions. Christians are asked to *build relationships* of respect and trust among churches and other religious communities to overcome suspicions and breaches of trust. They are encouraged to *strengthen their own religious identity* and faith and deepen their knowledge of other religions. They should *cooperate with other religions* for justice and the common good, *call on governments* to respect religious freedom, and *pray for all neighbours*.

Since these recommendations were thought necessary by the bodies drafting *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World*, it seems quite clear that conversion still remains one of the hottest issues to be tackled in an ecumenical context. And this is not only true of 'communal' or 'confessional' conversion that might be ecumenically decisive and an instrument to foster ecumenism, but also of the conversion of individuals as long as the distinction between converting and proselytising is blurred.

28 These are acting in God's love; imitating Jesus Christ; Christian virtues; acts of service and justice; discernment in ministries of healing; rejection of violence; freedom of religion and belief; mutual respect and solidarity; respect for all people; renouncing false witness; ensuring personal discernment; and building inter-religious relations (4–5).

4 Conversion as (Self-)Renewal and Reform: Some Future Tasks for the Roman Catholic Church

When, during one of their recent *ad limina* visits, the African bishops complained about the proselytizing of Charismatic and Pentecostal groups, Pope Francis is reported to have told them to ask themselves what might be lacking in the Roman Catholic Church.[29] As we have seen in *Ut unum sint*, the potential for self-criticism and self-renewal in ecumenical exchange with others seems severely underdeveloped. Simultaneously, however, there is a clear priority of unity. Similar to conversion, the movement towards unity is a process. In 2006 Pope Benedict still pointed out: "we must tolerate the separation that exists. St Paul says that divisions are necessary for a certain time and that the Lord knows why: to test us, to train us, to develop us, to make us more humble. But at the same time, we are obliged to move towards unity, and moving towards unity is already a form of unity".[30] That we are travelling 'towards' unity together rather than 'back to' unity is what conversion towards Christ means. In this context, Jürgen Moltmann deplores the fact that the aim of ecumenical dialogue is no longer identified as 'unity *and renewal*', but only as 'unity'.[31] How far does 'ecumenical' conversion, understood as the conversion of all dialogue partners to Jesus Christ, need to go hand in hand with renewal and reform, especially in a reflexive sense? This seems a question that the Roman Catholic Church needs to learn to answer, despite the many official assertions of an indispensable link between conversion and the willingness to reform that already exists. And this needs to be done in practice in order to retain ecumenical credibility in the future.

Conversion can never just concern only the others. It never happens without self-renewal. This comprises the revision of former attitudes and tenets. Pope Francis's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (EG) seems to lay the

29 Cf. W. Kasper, *Papa Francesco: La rivoluzione della tenerezza e dell'amore. Radici teologiche e prospettive pastorali* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2015), 86.

30 Benedict XVI, *To the Clergy of Rome* (2006): <http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060302_roman-clergy.html> (Accessed 28 July 2015).

31 J. Moltmann, "Ökumene im Zeitalter der Globalisierungen. Die Enzyklika 'Ut unum sint' aus evangelischer Sicht", Bernd Jochen Hilberath (Hrsg.), *Ökumene – wohin? Bischöfe und Theologen entwickeln Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Francke, 2000), 87–97; 90: "Vor dreißig Jahren hieß Ökumene: Einheit und Erneuerung der Kirche. Seit fünfzehn Jahren ist nur noch die Einheit als Ziel geblieben".

foundations for such a revision.[32] It propagates a church of dialogue mirroring the dialogue of God with his people (cf. EG 143). It suggests, as an image for unity, "not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it [suggests] the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness" (EG 236). It acknowledges that a structural conversion not only means a re-interpretation of structures but also an actual restructuring and goes even as far as contemplating "a conversion of the papacy" (EG 32). Recalling John Paul II's attempt to find "a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission" (UUS 95), the current pope states: "We have made little progress in this regard" (EG 32). It is to be hoped that such progress is made soon and that equally soon this process of conversion can no longer be reversed.

In any case, conversion as a key ecumenical concept remains a 'hot potato' not just because of a few individual conversions but, first of all, because within an ecumenical context the different meanings of conversion (i.e. moving from one church to another and the fundamental principle of conversion to God) are not sufficiently distinguished; secondly, because of abuses that tend towards proselytism among Christians; and, last but not least, because by its very nature, conversion is a challenge to Christian life.

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32 Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (2013): <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html> (Accessed 29 July 2015).

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CHAPTER 16

Ecclesial Repentance and Conversion: Receptive Ecumenism and the Mandate and Method of ARCIC III

Adelbert Denaux

1 The Personal and Social Dimensions of Sin and Conversion

Conversion is integral to the ecumenical movement. The 1993 *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* rightly interprets the "change of heart", which the Decree on Ecumenism sees as the soul of the movement, in this sense:

> In the ecumenical movement it is necessary to give priority to conversion of heart, spiritual life and its renewal. "This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and can rightly be called 'spiritual ecumenism'" (*UR*, n. 8). Individual Christians, therefore, insofar as they live a genuine spiritual life with Christ the Saviour as its centre and the glory of God the Father as its goal, can always and everywhere share deeply in the ecumenical movement, witnessing to the Gospel of Christ with their lives (Cf. ibid., n. 7).

In this text, conversion is understood as an act of individual Christians. In a similar way, the division of Christian churches and ecclesial communions is considered to be the result of the sinful behaviour of individual Christians. Although their sins affect and wound the Church, one cannot say that the Church as such is sinful, but her members are. Saying that the Church itself is guilty of the sin of division would seem to contradict the creedal formula that asserts the holiness of the Church of Christ. Or, as the International Theological Commission put it in its 1999 document *Memory and Reconciliation*:

> From a theological point of view, Vatican II distinguishes between the indefectible fidelity of the Church and the weaknesses of her members, clergy or laity, yesterday and today (*GS*, 43 §6), and therefore, between the Bride of Christ "with neither blemish nor wrinkle … holy and

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> immaculate" (cf. *Eph* 5:27), and her children, pardoned sinners, called to permanent *metanoia*, to renewal in the Holy Spirit. "The Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of purification and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal" (*LG*, 8; cf. *UR*, 6).[1]

Conversion, therefore, can be understood as the turning of a sinner to God (cf. the Hebrew Biblical term *šūb* and the Greek *epistrephein*). In the quoted texts, 'conversion' is not understood in the sense of pagans leaving their past way of life and embracing the Christian faith, but in a more special sense: "Men are converted when, by the influence of divine grace in their souls, their whole life is changed, old things pass away, and all things become new".[2] Or, as Arhur D. Nock defined it: "The reorientation of the soul of the individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right".[3] Hence, conversion can be seen as a (spiritual) movement within the person consisting of the following components: an act of introspection leading to (1a) the awareness that the way one lives is wrong and sinful (contrition), and (1b) eventually to the confession before others (God or humans) of that sinful state, together with a request for pardon (repentance) and (2) to a turn towards God, finding expression in a (more or less) radical change of mind and life in order to fulfil more fully the will of God (change in behaviour and attitudes). The first moment looks back to the past and the present, whereas the second component looks out towards the future. Conversion cannot be reduced to the first component of contrition, repentance and confession. It should be completed by a real change of mind and life. Feelings of guilt and repentance alone cannot be called 'conversion'.

No one can deny that the personal conversion of the members of the churches is an integral part of the ecumenical movement; yet, the ecumenical movement also contains a corporative and institutional dimension. The Dutch Reformed theologian Van Ruler has formulated the problem of the institutional character of the ecumenical problem in a very lucid way. According to

1 International Theological Commission (ITC), *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past* (1999), 1,2. In 5,3 the ITC speaks of the "sin of division": "To the extent that some Catholics are pleased to remain bound to the separations of the past, doing nothing to remove the obstacles that impede unity, one could justly speak of solidarity in the sin of division" (cf. 1 *Cor* 1:10–16).

2 Cf. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/conversion/> (Accessed 14 August 2015).

3 Cf. A.D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 7.

him, the ecumenical problem is the problem of the division of the Church. The division of the Church is in essence a division of institutions. Even where there is agreement with respect to the content and practice of faith, churches remain institutionally divided.

The main ecumenical problem is the organisational, institutional forms of the Church. With respect to this present situation, there are three possible attitudes. Either one church summons other Christians to return: this is the possibility of *pretension*. Or, secondly, one can resign oneself to the incomprehensible multiplicity of churches: this is the possibility of *resignation*. Finally, one can strive towards one Church, which is one both in a numerical sense and in a visible organisational sense: this is the possibility of *perseverance*.

When longing for the unity of Christianity, one has to realise that what one longs for needs to take a 'form'. The united Church will, in one way or another, take a confessional and liturgical form, but also a form of church order. We will not reach that goal only with dialogues, collaboration, common worship, exchange of preachers, open communion or inter-communion. We need to be one people, living in full communion. Perhaps for the time being, one may have to settle for a kind of federation of confessions or churches. Finally, however, one has to accept that the "church orderly" tunic of the body of Christ should be "seamless, woven in one piece from top down". For the sin of 'division', there is but one kind of healing possible. That is, to see clearly that the heart of the ecumenical problem lies in disunity of the institutional dimension of the Church. We have to be willing to continually hammer on the anvil of institutional unification and, in the meantime, to have the courage and the joy to be an institutional Church.[4]

The ecumenical movement tries to bring corporate bodies, churches and ecclesial communions to visible, sacramental and institutional unity. The division of churches is against the will of God. Division is a sin. Unity is what God wants (John 17). One could say that the divided churches are in a state of sin, in as far as they stick to their confessional identity without the will to change. Hence, a more corporate form of conversion, i.e. an ecclesial conversion, is also needed. It seems to us that certain developments in the last decades point in that direction.

4 A.A. van Ruler, *De betekenis van het institutaire* (*in de kerk*), A.A. van Ruler, *Theologisch Werk*, dl. IV, Nijkerk, 1972, 176–200, esp. 194–197. We summarise here a larger description of van Ruler's position in our paper: *Holy Spirit, Authority and Unity*, A. Denaux, D. Donnelly, J. Famerée (eds.), *The Holy Spirit and Ecumenism: Proceedings of the Conference Organized by the Card. Suenens Center at Bose* (*Italy*), *14–20 October 2002* (BETL, 181) (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 265–285.

Two Texts That Look Ahead

Shortly before and after the publication of the Directory, two texts were published that already expressed the idea that the Church as a whole should not only search for continual purification and renewal, but also be ready for conversion. In his 1995 encyclical *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II introduced the notion of 'social sins' and of 'sinful structures' that need conversion (par. 34):

> Even after the many sins which have contributed to our historical divisions, *Christian unity is possible*, provided that we are humbly conscious of having sinned against unity and are convinced of our need for conversion. Not only personal sins must be forgiven and left behind, but also social sins, which is to say the sinful "structures" themselves which have contributed and can still contribute to division and to the reinforcing of division.

Of course, elsewhere the Pope states that 'social sin' is an analogous concept that should be used with caution.[5] But in paragraph 84 of his encyclical, he states that even communities can be converted:

> The experience of ecumenism has enabled us to understand this better. If, in the interior spiritual space described above, Communities are able truly to "be converted" to the quest for full and visible communion, God will do for them what he did for their Saints. He will overcome the obstacles inherited from the past and will lead Communities along his paths to where he wills: to the visible *koinonia* which is both praise of his glory and service of his plan of salvation.

Four years earlier the informal ecumenical dialogue *Groupe des Dombes*, consisting of Protestant and Roman Catholic members, published a common

5 I quote from International Theological Commission (ITC), *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past* (1999), 1.3: "John Paul II also promoted the deeper theological exploration of the idea of taking responsibility for the wrongs of the past and of possibly asking forgiveness from one's contemporaries, when in the Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* [1984], he states that in the sacrament of Penance "the sinner stands alone before God with his sin, repentance, and trust. No one can repent in his place or ask forgiveness in his name". Sin is therefore always personal, even though it wounds the entire Church (Ibid., 31) … Also the situations of "social sin" – which are evident in the human community when justice, freedom, and peace are damaged – are always "the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins". While moral responsibility may become diluted in anonymous causes, one can only speak of social sin by way of analogy (Ibid., 16).

statement *Pour la conversion des Églises.*[6] In this document, a link is made between the question of confessional identities and the need for conversion.

> The group differentiates three types of identities and corresponding conversions. The first type is 'Christian identity' by which they mean one's belonging to Christ founded on the gift of Baptism. The corresponding Christian conversion means the response of faith to the call that comes to us from God through Christ.
>
> The second type is 'ecclesial identity and ecclesial conversion'. Ecclesial identity means the belonging of an individual or of a confessional church to the 'one holy, catholic' Church. Ecclesial conversion means the effort required from the whole church and from all churches to be renewed and become more capable of fulfilling their mission in accordance with the motto *ecclesia semper reformanda.*
>
> The third type is 'confessional identity and confessional conversion'. Confessional identity means belonging to a confessional church with its specific cultural and historical context and its own spiritual and doctrinal profile. By confessional conversion the group understands the ecumenical effort by which a Christian confession cleanses and enriches its own inheritance with the aim of rediscovering full communion with other confessions (vide 29).[7]

The main problem today is that the divided churches fear losing their confessional identity, when they engage in a structural path into the ecumenical movement. Hence, there is a growing tendency among the churches to stick to their confessional identities and refuse structural changes in the way their ecclesial life is organised. Ecumenical progress, however, will be dependent on the readiness of the divided churches to partially give up their confessional identities, while at the same time preserving their ecclesial and Christian identity. This will require from all of the churches at least a real confessional 'conversion'.

In what follows, we will examine some developments which point in the same direction, i.e. that ecclesial bodies take initiatives which imply accepting

6 Groupe des Dombes, *Communion et conversion des Églises: Édition intégrale des documents publiés de 1956 à 2005* (Collection Compact) (Montrouge: Bayard, 2014), 233–338; English translation: Groupe des Dombes, *For the Conversion of the Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 1993); and C. Clifford, *For the Communion of the Churches: The Contribution of the Groupe Des Dombes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 149ff.

7 Cf. Review of Dr. D.J. Smith in *HTS Teologiese Studies* 51/2 (1995), 566–568.

a corporate responsibility with respect to the sins of the past and express their willingness to progress towards conversion and renewal in order to come to full communion. More specifically, we will explore the opportunities these developments offer to the actual dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church (ARCIC III).

2 Ecclesial Repentance

The first development we want to consider is the practice of ecclesial repentance. Jeremy M. Bergen defines ecclesial repentance as "the act in which the church/denominational bodies make official statements of repentance, apology, confession or requests for forgiveness for those things which were once official church policy or practice".[8] This is a relatively new phenomenon, which only started in the twentieth century: "Indeed, in the entire history of the Church there are no precedents for requests for forgiveness by the Magisterium for past wrongs. Councils and papal decrees applied sanctions, to be sure, to abuses of which clerics and laymen were found guilty, and many pastors sincerely strove to correct them. However, the occasions when ecclesiastical authorities – Pope, Bishops, or Councils – have openly acknowledged the faults or abuses which they themselves were guilty of have been quite rare", the Dutch Pope and former Leuven university professor Adrian VI (1521–1522) being a notable exception.[9]

In recent decades, we have seen that churches or denominational bodies in North America, Western Europe and Australia as well as ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order have published statements of ecclesial repentance. These actions from churches are part of a larger phenomenon: "These churchly actions have elicited considerable interest and controversy both within the repenting denominations and among the public at large. In part, this is due to a broader trend in which the collective apology is employed in political, legal and business spheres (while celebrities

8 J.M. Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance. The Churches Confront their Sinful Pasts* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 3.

9 International Theological Commission (ITC), *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past* (2000), in ITC, *Texts and Documents 1986–2007*, ed. by M. Sharkey and T. Weinandy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 187–228, esp. 191: "One famous example is furnished by the reforming Pope Adrian VI who acknowledged publicly in a message to the Diet of Nuremberg of November 25, 1522: "the abominations, the abuses … and the lies" of which the "Roman court" of this time was guilty, "deep-rooted and extensive … sickness", extending "from the top to the members". See the text in Appendix.

seek to outdo each other in offering profuse apologies for various misdeeds). Governments and nations debate if and when apologies should be offered for past wrongs and scholars address what they mean. Victims of historical injustices, or their heirs, quite rightly seek recognition of their suffering and correction, often in the form of apologies and reparations".[10]

One can also see that the faults for which churches make statements of repentance are varied. It can be made for sins in general; the use of methods contrary to the Gospel 'in the service of the truth' (violence, intolerance etc.); the disunity of Christians: sins which have rent the unity of the Body of Christ; offences against the Jewish People, the people of the Covenant and the blessings; the ways that the weakest groups in society, such as immigrants and itinerants, have been harmed by hatred and the desire to dominate others; and sins against human dignity, particularly against women. Other reasons for expressing ecclesial repentance have been: sins against the rights of the person – victims of abuse, the poor, those killed by abortion and those 'exploited for experimental purposes by those who … distort the aims of science'; offences against aboriginal people (Canada, Australia); slavery and /or racism; apartheid in South Africa; clergy sexual abuse; war, civil war, crusades; conduct towards homosexual people; and others (Galileo; the Inquisition; support of eugenics).[11] We provide below some examples of ecclesial repentance with respect to the disunity of churches.

The Lambeth Conference 1920, Resolution 9, Reunion of Christendom

In 1920, the Lambeth Conference adopted and sent out the following Appeal to all Christian people:

> We, Archbishops, Bishops Metropolitan, and other Bishops of the Holy Catholic Church in full communion with the Church of England, in Conference assembled, realising the responsibility which rests upon us at this time, and sensible of the sympathy and the prayers of many, both within

10 Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 3–4.

11 See a survey in Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 307–331. See also L. Accattoli, *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness: The Mea Culpa's of John Paul II*, trans. J. Aumann (Boston: Pauline Books & Media Center, 1998). The Survey includes a Preface, An Examination of Conscience (xv-xxix); Part One: Historical and Ecumenical Precedents (1–80); Part Two: Pronouncements by John Paul II (80–253; including notes). Interestingly, Accattoli observes that the "'confession of sin' was first expressed by the Protestants, and for a long time the Catholic Church refused to do the same" (11). Later the Catholics, especially under John Paul II, became one of its greatest protagonists.

> and without our own Communion, make this appeal to all Christian people.
>
> We acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the universal Church of Christ which is his Body. We believe that the Holy Spirit has called us in a very solemn and special manner to associate ourselves in penitence and prayer with all those who deplore the divisions of Christian people, and are inspired by the vision and hope of a visible unity of the whole Church ….
>
> […] The causes of division lie deep in the past, and are by no means simple or wholly blameworthy. Yet none can doubt that self-will, ambition, and lack of charity among Christians have been principal factors in the mingled process, and that these, together with blindness to the sin of disunion, are still mainly responsible for the breaches of Christendom. We acknowledge this condition of broken fellowship to be contrary to God's will, and we desire frankly to confess our share in the guilt of thus crippling the Body of Christ and hindering the activity of his Spirit.[12]

According to J.M. Bergen, "The statement is notable as the first confession of the sin of division by an official organ of one of the divided churches".[13] It is also notable for speaking about "the sin of division" and for seeing "self-will, ambition and lack of charity" as main causes of maintaining the "breaches of Christendom".

Pope Paul VI (1963–1978)

Jeremy Bergen is aware that already "Adrian VI (1522–1523) deplored the faults of his times, precisely those of his immediate predecessor Leo X (1513–1521) and his curia, without, however, adding a request for pardon". Nevertheless, he adds that "it would be necessary to wait until Paul VI to find a pope who expressed a request for pardon addressed as much to God as to a group of contemporaries. In his address at the opening of the second period of the Second Vatican Council (1963), the Pope asked "pardon of God … and of the separated brethren" of the East who may have felt offended "by us" (the Roman Catholic Church), and declared himself ready for his part to pardon offences received.[14]

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12 <http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/ec-1920-Lambeth.pdf> (Accessed 17 August 2015).

13 Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 22.

14 "If we are in any way to blame for that separation, we humbly beg God's forgiveness. And we ask pardon too of our brethren who feel themselves to have been injured by us. For our

In the view of Paul VI, both the request for and offer of pardon concerned solely the sin of the division between Christians and presupposed reciprocity.[15]

Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1962–1965)

In its decree on ecumenism, the Council was aware of the ecumenical potential of a *mea culpa*. In article seven, the 1964 conciliar decree *Unitatis redintegratio* affirms that the witness of 1 John 1:10 also applies to "sins against unity", and then says: "We therefore, in humble prayer, beg pardon of God and of our separated brethren, just as we forgive them that trespass against us". This request for pardon is part of what has been called "spiritual ecumenism", recognizing that the actual division of the churches is a sin and that *metanoia* and prayer are essential parts of ecumenism. Just like Christian spirituality, ecumenism needs to be rooted in conversion:

> Requesting pardon of 'separated brethren' was a means by which to remove a barrier to dialogue and enter into a spirit of humility, openness and willingness to hear the other. In this light, the request for forgiveness paired with an offer of forgiveness may be interpreted as an example of the give and take of a true dialogue. But what is the nature and meaning of the trespasses that led to separation? These would be discussed in actual dialogues with other churches and, through an attempt to view history through the eyes of another, further repentance.[16]

John Paul II (1978–2005)[17]

In line with Paul VI and Vatican II, John Paul II[18] renewed expressions of regret for the 'sorrowful memories' that mark the history of the divisions among Christians. He also extended a request for forgiveness to several historical events in which the Church, or individual groups of Christians, were variously implicated. Furthermore, in his Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente* (nrs. 33–36), the Pope introduced a new aspect: he expressed the hope that the Jubilee of 2000 might be the occasion for a 'purification of the memory' of the

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part, we willingly forgive the injuries which the Catholic Church has suffered, and forget the grief endured during the long series of dissensions and separations" (quoted from Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 23).

15 ITC, *Memory and Reconciliation*, 191 (n° 1,1).

16 Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 24.

17 See L. Accattoli, *When a Pope Asks Forgiveness*.

18 In *Ut unum sint*, 88, John Paul II reminds us that the memory of most other Christians is marked by certain painful recollections and then says: "To the extent that we are responsible for these, I join my Predecessor Paul VI in asking forgiveness".

Church through repentance (TMA, 33).[19] The Roman Catholic Church's Day of Pardon on the first Sunday of Lent, 12 March 2000, on the occasion of the Jubilee and the new millennium, was an impressive expression of the intention of the Church to repent for the past sins of its members.[20]

Pope Francis

In his *Address to the Delegation from the Czech Republic*, on the Occasion of the 600th Anniversary of the Death of Jan Hus on Monday 15 June 2015, Pope Francis said:

> Six centuries have passed since the day that the renowned preacher and Rector of the University of Prague, Jan Hus, died tragically. Previously in 1999, St John Paul II, in an intervening international symposium dedicated to this memorable figure, expressed his "profound regret for the cruel death inflicted [on him]", and he numbered him among the

19 ITC, *Memory and Reconciliation*, 193 (n° 1.3): "33. Hence it is appropriate that, as the Second Millennium of Christianity draws to a close, the Church should become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children, recalling all those times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel and, instead of offering to the world the witness of a life inspired by the values of faith, indulged in ways of thinking and acting which were truly *forms of counter-witness and scandal.* ... It is fitting that the Church should make this passage with a clear awareness of what has happened to her during the last ten centuries. She cannot cross the threshold of the new millennium without encouraging her children to purify themselves, through *repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency, and slowness to act.* Acknowledging the weaknesses of the past is an act of honesty and courage which helps us to strengthen our faith, which alerts us to face today's temptations and challenges and prepares us to meet them. 34. Among the sins which require a greater commitment to repentance and conversion should certainly be counted those which *have been detrimental to the unity willed by God for his People.* In the course of the thousand years now drawing to a close, even more than in the first millennium, ecclesial communion has been painfully wounded, a fact 'for which, at times, men of both sides were to blame'. Such wounds openly contradict the will of Christ and are a cause of scandal to the world. These sins of the past unfortunately still burden us and remain ever present temptations. It is necessary to make amends for them, and earnestly to beseech Christ's forgiveness".

20 This consisted of a papal mass concelebrated with 30 cardinals and bishops. "A 'Universal Prayer', in which invitatories read by seven cardinals or archbishops for seven kinds of sin were followed each time with a prayer by the pope, constituted the core act of asking God's forgiveness. The service concluded with a series of promises by the pope on behalf of the church to never again commit certain offences"; cf. Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 116. For the seven kinds of sin, see paragraph 3 of part II of this paper (the seven sins first named).

> Reformers of the Church. In the light of this approach, the study must continue on the person and activity of Jan Hus, who for a long time was the subject of contention among Christians, however today he has become a reason for dialogue. This research, carried out without conditioning of an ideological type, will be an important service to the historical truth, to all Christians and to the whole society, even beyond the boundaries of your Nation.[21]

And at an official event at the Vatican on the previous Friday, Pope Francis commented on the speech that he was preparing for a ceremony of religious reconciliation and forgiveness that would be taking place on the Monday afternoon at the Nepomuk Papal College in Rome. The pope said that Hus's burning at the stake, after refusing to recant his alleged heresy, was an injury to the Church itself. It is an occasion where the Church should ask forgiveness for it, as should be done for all the acts in history when killings had been committed in the name of God. He referred specifically to the Thirty Years War, which in particular devastated the Czech lands and much of the rest of Europe in the early seventeenth century.[22]

In a similar way, Pope Francis, during his visit to the Waldensian temple in Turin on Monday 22 June 2015, asked for forgiveness for the Roman Catholic Church's treatment in the past of the Waldensians:

> Unfortunately, it happened and continues to occur that brothers do not accept their differences and end up making war against one another. By reflecting on the history of our relations, we cannot help but be saddened by the disputes and acts of violence committed in the name of our faith, and I ask that the Lord grant us the grace to recognize ourselves all as sinners and to be able to forgive one another. It is by the initiative of God, who never resigns himself to the sin of man, that new ways open to experience our fraternity, and we cannot escape it. On behalf of the Catholic Church I ask your forgiveness. I ask your forgiveness for unchristian-like and even inhuman attitudes and conduct which, historically, we have had against you. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, forgive us!"[23]

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21 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/june/documents/papa-francesco _20150615 _anniversario-jan-hus.html> (Accessed 17 August 2015).

22 <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/pope-francis-takes-significant-step-forward-with-jan-hus-comments> (Accessed 10 July 2015).

23 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/june/documents/papa-francesco _20150622 _torino-chiesa- valdese.html> (Accessed 17 August 2015).

Problems and Implications

The recent practice of ecclesial repentance is not without problems and asks for some clarifications. Firstly, a varied terminology is used: *mea Culpa*, ecclesial repentance, apology, purification/reconciliation of memories. The expression 'ecclesial repentance' is the most fitting, because it makes clear that this has to do with a corporative event, even when an individual church leader speaks for the church as a whole, and that this event may be part of a larger conversion process. The expression "*mea culpa*" sounds rather personal and is less appropriate for what is meant here. The 'purification/reconciliation of memories' can be understood as part of the ecclesial repentance.

Secondly, an exact knowledge of the facts is required before asking for forgiveness (historical dimension). The historical truth may be different from the historical perception of both parties involved and this perception has suffered from the prejudices of biased historians, both Catholic and other. Hence, the history confessed must be a true account of the past, not a biased history projected by the other party or by both churches involved. A question can be asked: Is it possible to have an accurate account of the history of the past, given that every history is inevitably told from a particular perspective?

Thirdly, whose guilt does the church confess? Its own, or that of its members? Sin is a personal reality. Therefore, technically speaking, the Church as such cannot sin, since we believe in the 'Holy' Church (creed). How can this belief be related to the fact that members of the Church (bishops and popes included) have committed sins against the unity of the Church, which still affect the Church today in such a measure that "the Church" as one subject asks for forgiveness and seems to assume the sin of its members just as Christ, the Holy one, has taken upon Himself the sin of humankind (theological dimension)?[24]

Fourthly, "the past exerts its influence on the present in the form of memory, especially the 'common memory' that carries the burden on conscience

24 My Anglican friend and member of ARCIC III, Charles Sherlock, made the following comment on this question: "Here I'd want to distinguish the Church as the object of faith – *credo ecclesiam unam sanctam* – the 'Church mystical', seen through the eyes of faith, as Hooker would put it, and the churches / Church universal, seen through the eyes of sight. The former is the spotless Bride, an eschatological reality in both theological and temporal senses – that towards which God is God's people, as the key aspect of the new creation in Christ. The latter is the necessarily finite, and thus under the reign of sin and death – a position to which your citations of popes seem to me to come increasingly close, but a step which Rome has thus far not quite taken. In teaching and preaching, I often make the point that we must see God's people, especially as gathered in a particular congregation, in *both* ways at the same time, or we either become cynical or remain too idealistic!"

(*Nostra aetate*, 3). Because these scandals are remembered, their negative effects continue in the present".[25] The International Theological Commission has given a thoughtful description of how these bad memories of the past might be purified:

> Purifying the memory means eliminating from personal and collective conscience all forms of resentment or violence left by the inheritance of the past, on the basis of a new and rigorous historical-theological judgment, which becomes the foundation for a renewed moral way of acting. This occurs whenever it becomes possible to attribute to past historical deeds a different quality, having a new and different effect on the present, in view of progress in reconciliation in truth, justice, and charity among human beings and, in particular, between the Church and the different religious, cultural, and civil communities with whom she is related. Emblematic models of such an effect, which a later authoritative interpretative judgment may have for the entire life of the Church, are the reception of the Councils or acts like the abolition of mutual anathemas. These express a new assessment of past history, which is capable of producing a different characterization of the relationships lived in the present. The memory of division and opposition is purified and substituted by a reconciled memory, to which everyone in the Church is invited to be open and to become educated.[26]

Some may think that there is more at stake here than just memory.[27] It is a fact that we are not united. The seed of division that was sown remains with us still. Hence, the question is whether going back to see who sowed it, and determining how and why it was sown, will really help us, especially as we were not actors at the time? Should we not rather focus on what we want to become and let bygones be bygones? We might think of God's own memory of our sins: He remembers them no more!

Fifthly, lest 'ecclesial repentance' remains a purely verbal act, the Church should commit itself to change things, to develop a particular action to restore or, if possible, to undo the wrong practices of the past.

Sixthly, ecumenical dialogue can play an important role in the examination of conscience: one side may recognize its own failings only in the light of how others see us.

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25 Bergen, *Ecclesial Repentance*, 126.

26 ITC, *Memory and Reconciliation*, 216 (n° 5,1).

27 We received this reflection from Sister Teresa Okure, member of ARCIC III.

Finally, according to some, we should add a scriptural or Gospel dimension to the historical and theological dimensions.[28] This perspective will be that of the recognition of the impossibility of making amends for the past (especially when we were not the actors). In light of this, we should focus on both our individual and corporate responsibility as well as our accountability for the Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel, who is Jesus. Readiness to forgive wrongs done is at the centre to the Gospel itself. The entire Christ-event concretizes, incarnates and sums it up. If we are truly his followers, whether as Catholics or Anglicans, we should each assume the responsibility of ensuring that our particular interests do not stand in the way of the Gospel.

3 The Mandate and Method of ARCIC III

In 2011, the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) started its third phase of dialogue.[29] The Preparatory Commission for the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission formulated the mandate of ARCIC III in terms that the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity then presented. At this point in the ecumenical journey, they charged the Commission with undertaking a third phase of its work.

They stated that "from the beginning of the dialogue, the commitment of the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church has been to seek 'restoration of complete communion in faith and sacramental life'".[30] This goal and this commitment have not changed. Nevertheless, we charge ARCIC with re-examining how, in the light of our common journey over more than forty years, this goal is understood and this commitment pursued today. They also asked the Commission to promote the reception of its previous work by presenting the work of ARCIC as a corpus, with an appropriate introduction.

On the basis of the mandate expressed in the 2006 *Common Declaration* of Pope Benedict XVI and Archbishop Rowan Williams, they affirmed the two interrelated areas as critical for further work: the Church as Communion, local and universal, and how in communion the local and universal Church may come to discern right ethical teaching. In both areas, the Commission was asked to build on the already agreed statements of the first two phases of dialogue.

28 We again thank Sister Teresa Okure for this suggestion.

29 Cf. Programme for ARCIC III. ARCIC III Paper 2011.05.02.

30 1966 Common Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey.

The methodology of ARCIC is an evolving reality that could be divided into four stages.[31] I will discuss each of these stages here:

A hermeneutics of overcoming doctrinal division by going to the origins: The initial mandate was to "inaugurate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion a serious dialogue that, *founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions*, may lead to that unity in truth, for which Christ prayed". In the first, 'classic' phase, the Commission made significant progress by working together from the scriptures and ancient common traditions and, as time went on, developing the theology of *koinonia.* This employed fresh language to 'get behind the past', while continuing to be nourished in a real, yet imperfect, communion. Such an approach produced much fruit around issues arising from the divisions of the Reformation, and offered new perspectives for church authorities to consider. Still, it was impotent to resolve issues which arose since the breach of communion.

An eschatological hermeneutics: The doctrinal hermeneutic of ARCIC II, as reflected in its later 'Agreed Statements', thus deepens ARCIC's classic method by orienting it to working backwards from the future, as well as forwards from the past. This can be seen in the "patterning power of the kingdom" vision of *Life in Christ*, the 'Yes/Amen' and reception motifs in *The Gift of Authority*, and especially the 'reversal' of Romans 8:30 in *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*. In taking an eschatological perspective into its hermeneutic, the Commission recognised that reconciliation can only come about as an act of hope and faith, as a graced response to the divine initiative. Above all, ARCIC II's call for mutual re-receptions of treasured traditions cannot be otherwise than a provisional expression of divine *koinonia*. This doctrinal hermeneutic means that our actions in the service of full, visible unity in Christ must be inseparable from mutual openness and deep humility.

A hermeneutics of practice: ARCIC III will continue the method of ARCIC I and II so far as possible. It will not only look to what we can say together about the Church as communion, local and universal, and how, in communion, we come to ethical discernment and teaching. It will also explore how our traditions live this ecclesial communion in practice in relation to such things as ecclesial self-understanding, ecclesial structures, processes of decision-making and of discerning right ethical teaching (*inter alia* by case studies). This will include each tradition seeing and recognising in its own communion the shortcomings and problems that hinder us from living more effectively and authentically ecclesial communion on the local and universal levels. The latter would be an act of ecclesial repentance.

31 Cf. ARCIC III Papers 2014.05.03 (drafted by A. Denaux).

A hermeneutics of receptive learning: ARCIC III is open for the gifts to be received from each other's tradition that might contribute to overcoming the proper shortcomings. It is a dynamics of receiving and giving gifts, of receiving and giving elements of the Apostolic Tradition, which might have been obscured or forgotten in the course of our wounded histories.

The latter two phases were the result of the members' discussion on the use of an appropriate method in the work of ARCIC III. The appointment of Professor Paul Murray as a member of ARCIC has played a decisive role in the decision to emphasise an hermeneutics of practice and of receptive learning. As is known, he is the initiator of the concept of 'receptive ecumenism'.[32] According to him, 'receptive ecumenism' represents a simple yet far-reaching strategy. The basic principle is that ecumenical progress is only possible "if each of the traditions, both singly and jointly, makes a clear, programmatic shift from prioritising the question, what do our various others first need to learn from us, to asking instead: What do *we* need to learn and what can *we* learn – or receive – with integrity from *our* others?"[33] Receptive ecumenism wants to extend the call for spiritual ecumenism "beyond the level of individual learning and growth alone to include also the even more challenging levels of necessary communal, structural and ecclesial conversion".[34]

Murray sees two supporting assumptions behind the need for receptive ecumenism: first there is the conviction that the call to organic, structural ecclesial unity is still of permanent significance, and next one notices "the related conviction that ecumenical theology must today be a matter of praxis … and not simply a matter, important though it be, of theoretical, conceptual, doctrinal definition and re-imagining".[35] Receptive ecumenism begins by having the courage to look at the present difficulties within one's own tradition and then to ask "how the difficulties in one's own tradition might, with integrity, be creatively addressed and one's tradition accordingly re-imagined in the light of learning from one's significant ecumenical others".[36] In short, "we need not

32 See P.D. Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), particularly Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda", 5–25; and P.D. Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning: Receiving Gifts for Our Needs", *Louvain Studies* 33 (2008), 30–45; and P.D. Murray, "ARCIC III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change", *One in Christ* 45 (2011), 200–211; ARCIC III Paper 2012.06.02.

33 Murray, "Receptive Ecumenism and Ecclesial Learning, 30–45, 32.

34 Ibid., 33.

35 Ibid., 34.

36 Ibid., 39.

just increased mutual understanding and appreciation *between* traditions [this was mainly the approach of ARIC I and II], but direct, explicit and effective self-criticism, growth, development, change-continuing ecclesial conversion to the truth of God in Christ and the Spirit – within each tradition respectively". This should be the approach of ARCIC III.[37]

4 Conclusions: ARCIC III and Ecclesial Conversion

At this juncture, we can integrate the different threads. In the first part of our paper, we have recognised that 'conversion' is at the heart of the ecumenical movement, but that in addition to the personal conversion of individual members of the Church, there is also a need for an 'ecclesial conversion'. Though 'sinful structures' and 'ecclesial conversion' are analogous concepts, they are nevertheless very effective realities in the life of the churches. As Murray puts it: there is a need "to transpose the ethic of self-criticism and conversion that lies at the heart of Christian life from the level of personal ethic wherein we are used to applying it and to apply it to the collective ecclesial level".[38]

The concepts and practices of 'ecclesial repentance' and of 'receptive ecumenism' have their own specific characteristics, which could be complementary. Ecclesial repentance focuses on the sins and faults of the past, that it honestly

37 Murray, "ARCIC III: Recognising the Need for an Ecumenical Gear-Change", 208.

38 Ibid., 209. In an email of 1 September 2015, Paul Murray drew my attention to a paper he presented to the Catholic Theological Society of America in June 2013 (which is not yet published), entitled: "Growing into the Fullness of Christ: Receptive Ecumenism as an Instrument of Ecclesial Conversion". There, he "draws out the way in which the understanding of ecclesial and confessional identity at work in Receptive Ecumenism (RE) is somewhat different from the way in which the Groupe des Dombes (GdesD) thinks about it in *For the Conversion of the Churches*. For the Groupe des Dombes it is about being prepared to relinquish that which distinguishes as a point of separation in order to open a way to a commonality that can be enough to unify. By contrast, for RE it is about each asking what is significant about the distinctive differences of the other, and what can even be learned from these in transposed form. The hoped-for result is not a stripping (kenosis) of differences towards a greater commonality but a learning across and from differences such that they might cease to be differences of division and become differences of fruitful diversity and mutual enrichment. In other words, the difference in the understanding of conversion that is at work here (a stripping and reducing, on the one hand, and an intensification and expansive growth, on the other hand) is also tied up with a difference in how the structural goal of unity is envisaged. For RE the goal is very definitely a communion of communions and traditions that can recognise each other and speak to each other across abiding differences of emphasis and expression".

confesses and for which it asks forgiveness. Through this, it hopes to come to a purification of wounded memories. Receptive ecumenism is more oriented towards recognising present difficulties in one's own tradition, and by doing this, becoming open to learning from other traditions how to solve these difficulties (through an exchange of gifts). This requires primary focussing on practical and organisational issues at stake.[39]

Both practices of ecclesial repentance and receptive ecumenism can be integrated into the more general concept of 'ecclesial conversion'. Above we have distinguished two complementary aspects in the conversion of individual persons: it is an act of introspection both leading to the awareness that the way one lives is wrong and sinful (contrition), and eventually to the confession before others (God or humans) of that sinful state, together with a request for pardon (repentance) and leading to a turn towards God, finding expression in a (more or less) radical change of mind and life in order to fulfil more fully the will of God. In an analogous way these two aspects are also integral to what we call 'ecclesial conversion'. The first aspect is more of a retrospective nature: each confessional tradition should engage in a retrospective examination of conscience of its sinful past and in recognising the difficulties that are present in its life and practice, confess them before God and the other as sinful and recognise that they prevent us from being fully Christ's Church. It also tries to see the link between the faults of the past and the difficulties in the present, in order to purify the wounded memories. The second aspect is more of a prospective nature: each confessional tradition should be open to a radical change of its confessional identity in a more genuine ecclesial (organisational and sacramental) 'form', through a process of learning and a receiving gifts from other confessions.

ARCIC III has the mandate to study the mutual relationship of the local and the universal church and their respective roles in taking right moral decisions. If it is the mandate of ARCIC III to help the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church to come to an 'ecclesial conversion' in this respect, its members should suggest that the mandating Churches start a process of healing the wounded history between them and, therefore, go back to the beginning of the separation between the two churches – to the extent that going back to a very complex beginning is helpful. Indeed, on the one hand, "the Anglican communion began its separate life in the reign of the English king Henry VIII (d. 1547) when in 1533–34 the Church of England defied the

39 Ibid., 209: "Receptive ecumenism recognises that this means that we need to focus on the organisational structures, processes and cultures of the churches and how they are challenged to learn from each other".

pope and unilaterally asserted its autonomy under God as a local expression of the universal church. This step hardly altered the outward appearance of the church; the old mass, for instance, remained its central liturgy throughout Henry's reign. But the principle of autonomy was an explosive force which led to more profound and extensive changes".[40] On the other hand, "if the first cause of the breach was the failure of the Papacy to deal with the consequences of the Renaissance of thought by calling a Council, the second was the temporal claims of the Bishops of Rome".[41] There have been faults on both sides. In a certain sense, the division between Rome and Canterbury is a shared responsibility.

In the field of the relationship between the local and the universal Church and their respective governance structures, we might say that the main difficulty to be identified on the Anglican side is the principle of provincial autonomy,[42] whereas on the Roman Catholic side, it would be the excessive centralisation resulting from a certain view on the primacy of the Bishop of Rome.[43] If we are to overcome the impasse in which our two churches find themselves (provincial autonomy versus Roman centralization), both communions will have to come to an ecclesial repentance as well as conversion. With this in mind, the following four steps need to be taken:

First of all, an honest historical study of the origins, in which the responsibility of both parties in the process of separation is described and recognised

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40 *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, N. Lossky, J.M. Bonino, J. Pobee, T. Stransky, G. Wainwright, P. Webb (eds.) (Genève/Grand Rapids: World Council of Churches Publications, 2002), 21–22.

41 B. Pawley, M. Pawley, *Rome and Canterbury Through Four Centuries: A Study of the Relations between the Church of Rome and the Anglican Churches 1530-1973* (London/Oxford: Mowbrays, 1974), 4.

42 The issue can be seen in the reluctance of Anglican Provinces to accept the attempts to come to an 'Anglican Communion Covenant', in which provinces are invited to give up partly their provincial autonomy in order to come to a more effective instrument of common decision on the level of the international Communion. See the text <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/99905/The_Anglican_Covenant.pdf?author=Covenant&subject=Covenant> (Accessed 20 December 2015). And how the churches reacted so far: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/39753/provincial-reception-of-the-anglican-covenant-for-acc-rev.pdf?subject=Covenant> (Accessed 17 August 2015).

43 When Archbishop Giovanni Benelli was substitute, or deputy, of the Secretariat of State, he made the following observation: "The real, effective power of jurisdiction of the pope over the whole Church is one thing. But the centralization of power is another. The first is of divine law. The second is the result of human circumstances. The first has produced many good things. The second is an anomaly". Quoted in J.R. Quin, "The Exercise of the Papacy. Facing the Cost of Christian Unity", *Commonweal* 123, 3 (July 12, 1996), 11–20, 18.

(action to be taken by each church). Next follows a description of the intrinsic link between the respective positions taken at the origin of the separation and the actual impasse in which they find themselves. Their confessional identity with respect to authority-structures is partly defined by the breach at the origin (action to be taken by each church). Third, a sincere recognition and confession of the faults of the past and of the actual defects in our governance systems and the damage this has caused to each other and to the Church of Christ and its mission, as well as a quest for pardon and forgiveness from God and from each other (action to be taken by each church). Finally, an action plan in which both communions show a readiness to correct or change their actual governance systems so that a more balanced governance practice emerges which enhances the communion within and between our churches (action to be taken by each church).

5 Appendix: Pope Adrian VI's Message to the Diet of Nuremberg of November 25, 1522

In the last and most remarkable portion of the Instruction, Pope Adrian set forth with broad-minded candour the grounds on which the religious innovators justified their defection from the Church on account of the corruption of the clergy, as well as that corruption itself. "You are also to say", so run Chieregati's express instructions, "that we frankly acknowledge that God permits this persecution of His Church on account of the sins of men, and especially of prelates and clergy; of a surety the Lord's arm is not shortened that He cannot save us, but our sins separate us from Him, so that He does not hear. Holy Scripture declares aloud that the sins of the people are the outcome of the sins of the priesthood; therefore, as Chrysostom declares, when our Saviour wished to cleanse the city of Jerusalem of its sickness, He went first to the Temple to punish the sins of the priests before those of others, like a good physician who heals a disease at its roots. We know well that for many years things deserving of abhorrence have gathered round the Holy See; sacred things have been misused, ordinances transgressed, so that in everything there has been a change for the worse. Thus it is not surprising that the malady has crept down from the head to the members, from the Popes to the hierarchy.

We all, prelates and clergy, have gone astray from the right way, and for long there is none that has done good; no, not one. To God, therefore, we must give all the glory and humble ourselves before Him; each one of us must consider how he has fallen and be more ready to judge himself than to be judged by God in the day of His wrath. Therefore, in our name, give promises that we shall use all diligence to reform before all things the Roman Curia, whence, perhaps, all these evils have had their origin; thus healing will begin at the source of sickness. We deem this to be all the more our duty, as the whole

world is longing for such reform. The Papal dignity was not the object of our ambition, and we would rather have closed our days in the solitude of private life; willingly would we have put aside the tiara; the fear of God alone, the validity of our election, and the dread of schism, decided us to assume the position of Chief Shepherd. We desire to wield our power not as seeking dominion or means for enriching our kindred, but in order to restore to Christ's bride, the Church, her former beauty, to give help to the oppressed, to uplift men of virtue and learning, above all, to do all that beseems a good shepherd and a successor of the blessed Peter.

Yet let no man wonder if we do not remove all abuses at one blow; for the malady is deeply rooted and takes many forms. We must advance, therefore, step by step, first applying the proper remedies to the most difficult and dangerous evils, so as not by a hurried reform to throw all things into greater confusion than before. Aristotle well says: 'All sudden changes are dangerous to States'".[44]

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44 Taken from L. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, Vol. IX.1, ed. Ralph Francis Kerr, The Mission of Francesco Chieregati to the Diet of Nuremberg. Adrian's attitude towards the German Schism, 127–153 <http://www.archive.org/stream/historyofpopesfro9pastuoft/historyofpopesfro9pastuoft_djvu.txt> (Accessed 08 February 2013).

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CHAPTER 17

The Essential Conversion of the Churches

André Birmelé

This Festschrift for Henk Witte has conversion as its theme. This basic notion of the Christian message is generally understood as applying primarily to the individual who is called to reorient his or her life in the light of the Gospel. However, the concept of conversion is not limited to individuals alone, but is also applicable to the Christian community as a whole. The people of God as such is also called to conversion, in order to draw closer to the will of God.

For more than fifteen years, Henk Witte has been a member of the Klingenthal Group, an informal ecumenical gathering which meets every eighteen months in the Alsatian village of Klingenthal at the invitation of the 'Centre for Ecumenical Studies' of the World Lutheran Federation in Strasbourg. The Group comprises about fifteen theologians who are specialists in ecumenism. This small group of experts, coming from different Christian communities, works free from pressures, and sees itself as a simple place of exchange regarding developments and new perspectives in the quest for unity. Henk Witte is a loyal participant, who never ceases to impress on the group the urgent need for the conversion of all the churches, including his own, the Roman Catholic Church. Only if all sides are prepared to reorient themselves will we be able to surpass the divisions still preventing the full ecclesial communion of all the Christian confessions. Only thus can they attain a visible unity and a more credible witness to the world.

To embark on the necessary conversion of the Churches, we propose to take the text published by the Groupe des Dombes in 1991, *For the Conversion of the Churches*.[1] The Groupe des Dombes, founded in 1937 by Father Paul Couturier, gathers about forty French-speaking theologians at the end of summer each year, half of them Catholic and half Protestant. It is an informal group with no formal mandate from any Church. Its published works have often proved to be thinking ahead of their respective Churches' curve. Its first publications on the Eucharist and ministry came in advance of the official dialogues organized by

* This chapter has been translated from French into English by Jack McDonald (KU Leuven).

1 Groupe des Dombes, *Pour la conversion des Eglises: Identité et changement dans la dynamique de communion* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1991). English Version: *For the Conversion of the Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993).

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the Churches on these topics, dialogues which themselves often referred to the ideas of the Groupe des Dombes.[2] The text, *For the Conversion of the Churches* is itself an example of this valuable foresight. As early as 1991, it set down the methodological factors at play, which would be taken up later in official ecumenical research. Up to that point, dialogue had concentrated on dogmatic themes, but the Groupe des Dombes sketched new parameters, which allowed the debate to move from a collection of agreements concerning individual themes to a large and general consensus. For this new stage, the conversion of the Churches is indispensable. This document is now twenty-five years old, but its proposals have lost nothing of their appropriateness and still call for practical realisation. In this essay, we would like to underline three factors which confront the Churches: terminological issues, historical context and biblical witness. We shall subsequently examine each of these issues.

1 Terminological Issues

The first part of the document of the Groupe des Dombes suggests some terminological keys. All the documents of the Groupe des Dombes begin in this fashion. To see this as simply 'clues for a terminology' would be too modest a title. Fundamental givens of the debate, which are already half way to conclusions, are actually being expressed.

The first terminological key is provided by the articulation of the relation between identity and conversion. We need to coordinate these two terms and not to oppose them. The non-biblical notion of identity is popular in the modern social sciences. The danger consists in conceiving of it in a static manner. Identity is always in the process of becoming and never definitively achieved. To speak of a Christian identity makes sense only in relation with the conversion which is the constant reorientation of life. Conversion is "an essential constituent of an identity which seeks to remain alive and, quite plainly, faithful to itself" (§14). Identity always has a relational dimension, a faithfulness open to the truth which calls us constantly to new forms of obedience. Christian identity, like conversion, consists in turning unceasingly, always and vigorously towards the One who is the way, the truth, and the life. To understand it as a return to first principles would be an unfortunate mistake. Conversion "is a grace which opens onto a task … It is celebrated in the

2 For this, see *Vers une même foi eucharistique?* and *Pour une réconciliation des ministères*, texts published by Presses de Taizé in 1972 and 1973. English versions: *Towards one Eucharistic Faith?* and *For the Reconciliation of Ministries* (London: SPCK 1973 and 1975).

proclamation of the Word, and in the sacramental act of reconciliation, as it is likewise in the sacrament of the Eucharist" (§39). The Groupe des Dombes – and here is the hallmark of its way of addressing the issue – deduces from this that what applies for the identity of the Christian individual, logically applies to the Church as well; which is nothing other than the communion of believers, the people of the baptized. "Ecclesial identity must always place itself in the service of Christian identity" (§25). In this way, all ecclesial identity is called, in the image of the identity of the believer, to constant conversion.

Next, the very idea of ecclesial identity is a delicate one. We cannot speak of the Church's identity without factoring in the incarnations of this identity in the forms and ways of confessing our faith in the world. This confession is expressed through denominational identities. A denominational identity is, according to the Groupe des Dombes, a positive factor. An individual's conversion is always the conversion to the Church as well as conversion to a professing identity (§112). That each denominational identity is understood as a full and authentic expression of the Church of Jesus Christ in its singularity and its wholeness is not in itself to be regretted. The difficulty appears when a denominational identity is understood as exclusive and when it sets itself up as the only authentic identity. When this happens, the link with the fullness of the Church expressed in and through other denominational identities is compromised, with each denomination trying "to safeguard its own identity jealously and to be scarcely open to the share of truth present in its partner" (§32). Thus, we are no longer confronted with a legitimate denominational identity but with a sectarianism that ends up in mutual rejection and division. Church history shows that this is a road often travelled. The modern ecumenical movement has as its goal to rise above this denominational sectarianism and to reach towards a unity of denominational identities which are legitimately different. Such a task is essential. It is also delicate because each denominational family must move beyond the temptations of sectarianism and enter into a genuine movement of conversion. It must rediscover a complete loyalty to the Gospel and therefore confess its own limits and insufficiencies. This process will lead believers and their respective churches to recognize that elements of church identity exist "which it is incapable, at least for the moment, of receiving and incorporating into its own existence" (§47). Only in this way will the path be opened to genuine unity, "a full mutual ecclesial recognition" (§51). This sort of ecclesial conversion is always the conversion to Jesus Christ of all individuals and of the Church in itself, a conversion which includes forgiveness. This conversion does not happen to the detriment of denominational identity, but purifies denominational identity by deepening its anchoring in the Gospel. Thus, the document of the Groupe des Dombes outlines from the

beginning, which is just supposed to be a clarification of vocabulary, the fundamental systematic choices which it will later confirm through a historical survey and a return to biblical affirmations.

From the outset, the document outlines an understanding of the unity of the Church and proposes the ecumenical methodology which needs to be applied to realize this. A suggested structure is offered which, in 1991, was hardly on the agenda of the movements towards unity in the different Churches. Yet these structures can be described as prophetic because they would go on to characterize the ecumenical movement of the last twenty-five years, even if we hardly ever acknowledge the text of the Groupe des Dombes which had first sketched them out. From where we are now, we can elucidate four aspects proposed by Dombes:

The first entails its positive understanding of denominational identity. We can only access ecclesial identity through denominational identities. This way of proceeding contradicts what had previously been the norm in ecumenical research: people were convinced that only by moving beyond all confessional identities would arrival at true unity be accomplished. All the methods of the World Council of Churches, and in particular the model of conciliar community which it approved at the General Assembly in Nairobi in 1975, went in this direction. The convergence proposed by the BEM text (Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry) in 1981 was conceived in the service of the same vision. After the General Assembly in Canberra in 1991, people began to distance themselves from this vision. Little by little, a more positive understanding of denominational identity on the road to unity gained ground, and it was this which led to declarations of communion between diverse denominational families. The Groupe des Dombes had already undertaken this evolution and so performed pioneering work.

The second factor, which has been taken up elsewhere, is the conviction that the same Gospel truth can be expressed in different ways. Another tradition will use other options which stem from its history, its tradition of prayer and its specific theological stresses, and which are capable of being the vehicle of the same truth which is expounded in my Church. The Dombes document refuses to define this truth. Its references to the Word, to the sacraments of baptism, reconciliation, and Eucharist, which we have mentioned above, are of course valuable and have been cited in many ecumenical projects. It would have improved the Dombes text if it had specified that the Word is the truth which makes the Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. It would have been important in particular to speak in this context of ministry. This task remains unfinished in the Dombes text, as elsewhere.

The third significant conclusion is the value of difference. Ecumenical searching does not have the aim of abolishing difference. All seeking after uniformity is sterile and sluggish (see §191). This contradicts the very idea of conversion, which is invariably a reorientation and reincarnation of the Gospel in contexts which never cease to renew themselves. The aim is not to suppress differences. On the contrary, it is to transform the nature of difference. Separated bodies must be seen as legitimate. True unity encompasses the legitimate differences of different ecclesial identities. Rejecting difference is the same as denominational sectarianism: in this case, an ecclesial family only accepts its own convictions and rejects off-hand any other identity which expresses the Gospel in another way. The only options in this line of thought are the absorption of other denominations or maintaining the current stand-off – options of no ecumenical interest (see §194). It is this sclerosis of denominational identity which we need to move beyond.

Concerning this latter point, we should not give in to the relativism where all differences are desirable in themselves. That has been the feeling of some dialogues. The task of dialogues is to rework differences which have ended in separation in order to transform them into legitimate differences. They try to understand the sense and the origin of another expression of the same Gospel truth. But they are not for all that an end in themselves. Dialogues run the risk of being an endless spiral where we can always find the theme which will be the subject of the next professional study. The end-point of dialogues is to propose to the Churches the ways which will permit them to declare that former condemnations do not apply to other Churches in the current state of their teaching. If this is the case, then a declaration of communion (or of partial communion) becomes possible. Such declarations lend to dialogues their ultimate sense and authority. The Dombes text speaks neither of theological dialogues nor of their direction. But this way of seeing things is made possible by the basic options suggested in *For the Conversion of the Churches*.

2 Historical Context

The second part of the document suggests a method of testing these basic affirmations by studying the history of the Church. The section, entitled 'Examples from History', takes up more than half the document, and here too the work of this unofficial group is true to itself. All its previous publications work in the same direction. We could explain this by the fact that a majority of its members are historians, but this would only be part of the story: the group is convinced that modern ecumenical work only makes sense by reference to the

history which triggered the divisions. Understanding these events is the first step in moving beyond them.

First and foremost, an initial approach is offered by the mention of the first Christian centuries. Their example shows, according to the Groupe des Dombes, that initially the Church knew how to struggle for the truth without ossifying itself in definitive formulae. The Council of Nicea, the theology of Basil of Caesarea and the Council of Ephesus are cited as evidence. That these were open to difference is proved by the pronouncements of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I in 1967 and the encounter of the Eastern Orthodox with the Coptic Church in 1989 (§60f). In these declarations, the Church leaders considered that the divisions of the time happened above all due to linguistic misunderstandings (§57–63). We could add here the declarations made by the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, on the one hand, and the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church on the other, in 1984 and 1988 respectively; declarations which draw a line under the Christological disagreements following the Council of Chalcedon in 451.[3] We might find ourselves a bit surprised by the interpretation favoured here by the Groupe des Dombes: in reality, these various events also engendered anathemas and divisions. It is only recently that the idea of linguistic difficulties and misunderstandings has appeared as the hermeneutical key allowing us to understand the disputes of earlier times. It stretches credibility to cite the doctrinal developments of the first Christian centuries as examples of open and generous confessional identities. Of more interest is the example of St Augustine (§64–72). His story is that of the articulation between personal conversion and the conversion of the Church, which he would be led to direct. His own personal conversion to God is also a conversion "to the Catholic Church received as orthodox" (§68). Called first to priesthood, then to the episcopate, Augustine's personal conversion "triggered a dynamic of renewal for the ancient Churches of the West and the East and exercised a crucial influence on the Latin Church in the following centuries and especially on the Protestant Reformers" (§72). The following centuries would be characterized, however, by an insistence on identity-without-conversion, which would lead to a hardening of the rupture between East and West (§73–85).

A second central point in this more historical part of the document is devoted to the events of the 16th Century. Martin Luther is approached in a positive way. Following his personal conversion, he launched an urgent appeal for the conversion of the Church. He had no intention of splitting from the

3 Texts in: J. Gros, H. Meyer, W. Rusch (eds.), *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982–1998* (Geneva: WCC, 2000), 691f.

Church, indeed quite the contrary, but he was not listened to. There were some attempts at conciliation, not by ecclesiastical but by political authorities, in particular Emperor Charles V, but these political moves failed. As the document argues:

> The Protestant Reformers credited the church they had reformed with full ecclesial identity. When they claimed this for their churches alone, expecting that the whole Western church would reform itself according to the same criteria, the dialogue on unity became sterile, for the Roman church did the same over against them (§93).

In contrast to St Augustine, whose individual conversion stimulated a conversion of the Church, the Reformers' conversions did not have the same impact on the Church of the 16th Century. Thus, separation was effected and, in spite of various attempts at mediation, especially after the Thirty Years War, the different Churches dug themselves into confessionalism. This was an inevitable consequence of each Church claiming an exact identity between its own denominational ethos and the fullness of the nature of the Church. This exclusivism dominated everywhere and became the norm for more than four centuries. According to the Groupe des Dombes, there was an inversion of priorities, with denominational identity trumping Christian identity (§121). Any notion of Christian unity was thus impossible. Even justified insistences on this or that aspect of the faith became occasions for perverting Christianity because they were affirmed in an exclusive way, and hence sealed off any possibility of dialogue (§ 195).

The procedure of this text is rigorous and its logic pursues a single aim: to show that the divisions in the Church are the consequence of a false insistence on denominational identity to the detriment of the Church's larger general identity. Every initiative with this sort of intention has a tendency to interpret every salient fact through the lens of its declared aim. In doing this, it therefore has a tendency to forget the facts which indicate that the situation is more complex. For example, it is going too far to claim that the Reformers considered the doctrine of the Visible Church as a negative development (§92 and §123): Luther and Calvin, of course, speak of the Invisible Church that goes beyond the Visible Church of our age. They nevertheless insist on the fact that we only have access to the Invisible Church via the Visible. Similarly, we are not doing justice to the Roman Catholic Church in contending that it is now nothing more than an institution and a hierarchical structure which has forgotten the message of the Gospel (§124). These over-simplifications are surprising, but, even so, the basic theory of the Groupe des Dombes is sound: a hardening

of attitudes provoked the defence of various confessionalisms, and this happened as much in the Roman Catholic Church as elsewhere, which needs to be understood as a denominational Church alongside others. This attitude has produced a generalized doctrinal and attitudinal fossilization and has prevented all dialogue.

Thirdly, it is only "in fact as soon as Christians recognize that their confessional church lacks ecclesiality because of division, the process of ecclesial and confessional conversion to full catholicity becomes possible again" (§122). This understanding only struck the Churches in the 20th Century because of the ecumenical movement, which the document welcomes, as a conversion to an ecclesial identity that moves beyond earlier denominationalisms. The text relates in brief (perhaps too briefly) the history of this before the Second Vatican Council. Concerning the Roman Catholic Church, it stresses the symbolic gestures made by the Church; in particular the meetings of the popes with the leaders of other Christian families (§136f):

> These symbolic gestures which are the product of conversion become in turn generators of the spirit of conversion. They encourage and embolden Christians of every confession to be involved in a similar process. As such these gestures are indispensable for the dynamics of unity (§141).

Both the work of Faith and Order and the conciliar decree *Unitatis redintegratio* of Vatican II, should be understood as decisive facts that demonstrate a departure from confessionalist arthritis and entry into a broader ecclesial identity.

The Dombes document scarcely spends any time discussing doctrinal dialogues however – only one page of three paragraphs (§142–144). It would probably have been desirable for the Dombes to pay more attention to this issue. The approach favoured by the Dombes text had already been rehearsed in various other ecumenical dialogues, such as that between European Lutherans and Reformed: these two denominations signed the Leuenberg Agreement in 1973, which precisely understands denominational identities as legitimate expressions of a wider ecclesial identity. Leuenberg is mentioned without further explanation (§145), and with analogous dialogues with Anglicanism not being mentioned at all. This omission is probably explained by reasons of diplomacy: extended discussion of the various dialogues undertaken by the Churches of the Reformation would have fractured the delicate Catholic-Protestant balance that the Groupe des Dombes tries to maintain at all costs. In 1991, the Roman Catholic Church had not begun this level of dialogue. It was only in 1990 that Rome committed itself to this route, one which would result

in 1999 in the Common Declaration concerning the Doctrine of Justification; a document presented substantively later than that of the Groupe des Dombes. At the same time, the Groupe could never have predicted the current retreat to confessionalism which we see more or less everywhere in today's Church: Rome now proposes a very limited interpretation of the words *subsistit in* in the Constitution on the Church of Vatican II, an interpretation that reduces ecclesial identity to a unique Roman Catholic expression. This has not stopped the contemporary ecumenical movement from engaging in new articulations of ecclesial identities, which have not been abandoned but transformed in the light of the lifting of historic anathemas. We have learned to distinguish between sectarian differences and legitimate differences (§153). A conversion of the Churches is right on track in spite of certain very traditionalist tendencies that seek to derail all progress.

3 Biblical Witness

The return to a biblical witness has only occurred at a third stage in a document which begins with systematic and continues with historical approaches. This part is also very brief and shows that the authentic articulation of identity and conversion is a major biblical concern. The text does not treat the theme of conversion in the biblical message in its entirety. It is limited to a few significant aspects on which to ground the necessary conversion of the Churches.

In the first instance, the text proposes an equivalence between conversion and repentance by distinguishing the two terms in the following way: conversion is suggested to the pagan who discovers the Gospel, whereas repentance is essentially limited to Jews whose already existing loyalty to God simply needs reorienting (§156). In both cases, the life-change is indicated by baptism, which is the particular moment that is a sign of conversion. In both cases, one needs to renounce a way of thinking or behaving considered to be bad. But this reorientation only makes sense if the new life has a well-defined content. This content is a response to the call of Christ and an invitation to follow the example of Christ who himself underwent a 'conversion': "he renounced his divine condition and turned towards human beings", as the hymn in Philippians (2:6–11) sings forth – a passage which is quoted in full in the document (§164f). In a paradoxical twist, Christ leads humanity in a movement from death to life, which is the only way of bestowing a full identity. This attitude characterizes the entire life of Jesus as the one who goes out in search of men and women who are lacking in life: "this movement of turning calls for reciprocity" (§167). The believer must commit himself or herself to this in every moment of his or

her life. One gives up certain elements of their identity, which are important to them, without ever renouncing the heart of their faith. In this way, the biblical narrative shows that the reordering of life does not involve any loss of identity but, rather, asserts a re-engagement of identity. The Dombes text illustrates this with several examples such as the Prodigal Son, where the younger brother finds his identity by means of a reorientation of his life, whereas the older brother loses it (§172). What remains the case is that identity is always fragile because it is vulnerable to temptation (§174f). From this it follows that constant conversion is needed (§177 and §195) Next, the particular interest in this return to the biblical texts comes from the fact that the Groupe des Dombes shows what is important to the individual, in the biblical texts, is equally valid for the whole of the people. The Old Testament already witnesses to this. As Jacob who struggles with God becomes Israel (Genesis 32:28), so the people themselves together receive the name which is his individual identity. The people as a whole are nonetheless required to return constantly to God, and calls to conversion and to a return to God are often heard in the Old Testament (§170f). The New Testament does not lag behind here: the new identity of Cephas who becomes Peter applies to the whole Church. Calls for the conversion of the Church are constant, as is shown for example in the letters written to the Churches in the second chapter of Revelation (§173).

For the Groupe des Dombes, the repentance and conversion of the Churches is evidently necessary. Without stating it, the Groupe operates a precise ecclesiology: the Church is the community of believers. It is not simply a gathering of the converted, it is the Body of Christ. But there is no dimension to the Church which is anything other than the communion of believers. In this sense, what applies to individual believers applies equally to the Church. Therefore, the urgency of repentance and conversion for believers is directly transferable to the Church. This reality seems to be simply obvious for the Groupe des Dombes, which demonstrates it with various biblical references. In other words, the Church is not so much on the side of God, as He relates to believers, as it is on the side of the believers as they relate to God. The Church is therefore itself vulnerable to temptation and called to constant repentance and conversion. This is the fundamental theological choice at work in this document.

Finally, the Groupe des Dombes comes to a logical conclusion in the diversity of expressions of the one Church that are apparent from the New Testament period. There are from the beginning different groups within the Church. The recognition of diversity is part of the being of the Church (§162). Conflicts are present from the very first New Testament texts, as is shown by the history of the first council, the gathering held in Jerusalem in Acts 15 (§163).

It is only in freedom and obedience to the Gospel that we can manage to avoid schism. Reconciliation is essential and fundamental (§175). The Dombes document sees, right from the first Christian century, indicators of different denominational identities which stem from specific cultural and historical contexts. Pagan-Christian communities had a specific doctrinal and spiritual profile that differed from the Jewish-Christian community in Jerusalem. The specificity of this era was its capacity for reconciliation. It is this capacity that enabled the Church to maintain its identity in a reconciled diversity. This capacity included conversion in the wake of Peter's, who went through a conversion during his encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10). It is undeniable that the Groupe des Dombes has, in authoring these passages, a definite preconception which it wishes to justify by allusion to biblical witness in the final pages of the document. We do not criticize this because it is exactly in this area that modern exegesis can be applied. Church identity develops its own grammar from the beginning via particular confessional identities, which must remain open to conversion and must resist confessionalism and fossilization. The first Christian communities have shown us the way here.

The closing remarks of the document are slightly disappointing. They are limited to a call to the Churches truly to conform themselves to the *una*, *sancta*, *catholica et apostolica ecclesia*. All the Churches are asked to move beyond their respective sclerotic tendencies. The Protestant Churches are asked to rediscover the Eucharist in order to be closer to the Church across the centuries. Catholics are asked to give constant and universal priority to the message of Jesus Christ which goes above and beyond all insistence on historic institutions. Of course these remarks are correct. But they only relate obliquely to the dynamic of the actual text. It is true that this text announced its own conclusions in the introduction. Because of this, the conclusion itself lacks brio because it is simply a repetition of what has already been stated.

What we take to heart from this call for the conversion of the Churches is the necessity of repentance and conversion which applies to all confessional identities, including Roman Catholic identity. In doing this, the text opens an unexpected chapter. Recognizing the Church's capacity to sin is not a natural Roman Catholic reflex. Vatican II certainly envisaged some Church reform, but the imperfection of the Church applied only to the Church's individual members, not to the Church itself.[4] Since then, attitudes have apparently evolved. In particular, Pope John Paul II apologized many times for the Church's mistakes

4 Cf: *Unitatis redintegratio.* The decree on ecumenism speaks of the errors of the Church *in suis membris* (UR 3).

and affirmed that the Church is at the same time holy and sinful.[5] This realization is working its way through the Church, but it is far from being accepted by all. The Groupe des Dombes's text reminds us of its urgency. Only repentance and the conversion of denominational identities can open the way to the genuine unity of the Church of Christ.

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5 Guiseppe Alberigo has studied all the affirmations which point in this direction in a small work: *Chiesa santa et peccatrice* published by Qiqajon (Bose) in 1997. The phrase "holy and sinful" was used by the pope in 1982 in Fatima. Alberigo quotes it in detail on p. 12. This work can be found in an abridged version in French in: *Revue des sciences religieuses* 71 (1997), 233–252.

Index